



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

**“A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EFL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS ON
THEIR TEACHING STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN CUENCA”**

Trabajo de Titulación Previo a la obtención del
Título de Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación
en Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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Cuenca - Ecuador

2014-2015



Resumen

En un estudio exploratorio acerca de las estrategias que los profesores aplican en clases llevado a cabo en la ciudad de Cuenca por Ana María Calle en 2012, patrocinado por la Dirección de Investigación de la Universidad de Cuenca (DIUC), cincuenta y cuatro (54) profesores de inglés de colegios públicos fueron entrevistados. Sin embargo, sólo unas cuantas entrevistas fueron analizadas. El objetivo de este estudio es determinar las percepciones de los profesores acerca de las estrategias de enseñanza que aplican en sus clases. Por lo tanto, cinco (5) entrevistas que contienen la información más relevante fueron seleccionadas para el análisis cualitativo. De las cuales, los resultados muestran que la mayoría de los participantes aplican estrategias tradicionales consideradas por los docentes como las más apropiadas para la enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Otro resultado indica que los profesores aplican métodos eclécticos, pues ellos contienen una combinación de estrategias comunicativas y tradicionales. Sin embargo, las estrategias comunicativas, algunas veces, no son utilizadas apropiadamente y no cumplen el propósito para el que fueron diseñadas. Los resultados del presente estudio servirán como soporte para futuras investigaciones en el tema, ya que los mismos pueden servir como una guía para los procesos de formación de docente en el área de inglés. También, los profesores podrían aplicar las estrategias correctamente e implementar otras alternativas. Además, los resultados obtenidos contribuirán con implicaciones pedagógicas, que pueden ser útiles para los docentes de la carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la Universidad de Cuenca.



Palabras clave: Percepciones, estrategias, estrategias comunicativas, estrategias tradicionales.



ABSTRACT

A previous exploratory study, carried out by Calle et al., sponsored by the Research Directory of the University of Cuenca (DIUC), regarding teachers' strategies was carried out in Cuenca in 2012. Fifty-four (54) public English teachers were interviewed; however, only some interviews were analyzed. The objective of this paper is to determine the teachers' perceptions regarding their teaching strategies. Therefore, five (5) interviews, which contained the most relevant information, were chosen for the qualitative analysis. The results showed that the majority of the participants prefer applying traditional strategies in class since they argue traditional strategies are the most effective ones to learn the target language. Also, teachers apply eclectic methods in which there is the combination between communicative and traditional strategies. However, some communicative strategies are not used appropriately. The results of this study will help further research on this topic since they can shed light on training processes. After all, teachers could use the strategies appropriately and implement innovative ones. Furthermore, the results will contribute to pedagogical implications, which can be useful for professors of the English Language Major of the University of Cuenca.

Keywords: Perceptions, strategies, communicative strategies, traditional strategies.



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DEDICATION

TO MY BELOVED

Mom, **Zoila Yunga †**, who was my inspiration to develop this thesis, and to my beloved sisters **Sonia**, and **Rocío**, as well as my beloved nieces, **Melanie**, **Emily**, and nephew, **Joaquín**.

PAOLA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for giving me this lifetime to see my dream come true. I would like to thank my Mom, **Zoila Yunga †**, who shaped my life with her love, wisdom, advice, and her exemplifying life. I want to say thank you to my sisters, my uncles, and aunts, who gave me support and love. Also, I am grateful for my friends, and English Language School teachers. They have shared their time and knowledge with me, especially my tutor, **Ana M.Calle**, who helped me with the elaboration of this thesis. I just want to say THANK YOU all, for all these years spent with me!

PAOLA.



INTRODUCTION

Education is a complex process, which involves simultaneous factors that help keep or change its natural development. When talking about teaching-learning process, both students and teachers are part of it. Therefore, in order to learn (students) and to teach (teachers) both need tactics or strategies to be effective in this process.

An Indonesian researcher, Rachmania Bachtiar Kassing, states that the strategies teachers use in their classes are vital in order to catch and keep students' attention in class. Students and teachers may perceive the effectiveness of teaching strategies in a different way. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration how students react towards teacher strategies, and which are the most effective and appropriate ones (6-7). Furthermore, Crookes and Schmidt state that what teachers perceive about the use and effectiveness of their strategies is valuable (qtd. in Bachtiar²⁴). This topic is addressed in the current study.

This document is divided in five (5) chapters as follows, the description of the study, the theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, and the results of the study. Chapter I, as its names indicates, addresses the scope of the study. In the second chapter, important definitions are provided regarding teachers' perceptions and approaches. In chapter III relevant studies are included, which show some similarities with the current study. Chapter IV describes the methodology employed, which is mainly qualitative. Finally, results and conclusions are offered in the last chapter.



CHAPTER I

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. Background

Traditionally, it was thought that what students think about teachers' strategies or what teachers themselves think about their own strategies was not important neither in the learning process nor in the students' outcomes, but education has evolved and both students and teachers' perceptions about their own strategies are important. Such perceptions can have positive or negative implications in the learning process. Therefore, to explore what teachers notice about their strategies would signify an advanced step in the learning process development.

Several studies on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) have been carried out in some countries such as Indonesia, India, etc., regarding teachers' perceptions. Such studies have taken place in different contexts in which English is the lingua franca or L2. There was also a study on teaching strategies carried out in Cuenca by Calle et al. The results of this study conducted at the University of Cuenca, sponsored by its Research Directory (DIUC), show that high school teachers of public schools apply both communicative and traditional strategies in the learning process. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of teachers apply communicative strategies that include games and other different activities that promote motivation among students. Meanwhile, thirty-three percent (33%) of teachers still use traditional strategies. In addition, in some cases there are teachers who misunderstand terms or concepts related to the learning process (Calle et al.14).



Based on the previous data, this proposal attempts to investigate an aspect, which was not considered before: Teachers' perceptions. In other words, the purpose of this study is to explore on what teachers perceive about their own strategies. This study will use the information of fifty-four (54) interviews of English teachers, who work in Public High Schools in Cuenca. They were previously collected and stored in a database.

It is important to mention the process by which the information of these fifty four (54) interviews was conducted. Fifty-four (54) teachers were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Only some information from these interviews was used by the researchers in the previous study. However, most of it has not been analyzed deeply. That is the reason why this study aims to investigate further teachers' perceptions.

1.2. Justification

Education is a process that is influenced by several aspects related to the teaching philosophy, curriculum, technology, and human development. In fact, education is a complex process, which involves many factors: didactic material, teaching strategies, technological equipment, infrastructure, as well as students, teachers, parents, authorities, beliefs and society in general. In a study carried out by Calle et al. in Cuenca in 2012, sponsored by the Research Directory of the University of Cuenca (DIUC), it was found that English teachers in public high schools in Cuenca do apply traditional or communicative strategies in different degrees. Forty- four percent (44%) of strategies are traditional ones. Also, teachers seem to use communicative strategies in a lower degree. However, there are some misconceptions and misuse of these strategies in the classrooms (9).



Therefore, this study aims to analyze one element of the educational system: the teachers' perceptions.

Certainly, teachers play an important role in the educational process. Around the world and especially in our country, it has always been questioned why it is that students are not able to communicate in English after spending six (6) years in high school. Since fifty-four (54) interviews were applied to English teachers from different public high schools in Cuenca, which have not been analyzed, it is necessary to research teachers' perceptions. The literature also suggests investigating this issue.

Researchers as Jia, Eslami and Burlbaw, state that since there is no single model of learning process all learners go through, there exists the need to analyze and comprehend teachers' perceptions and beliefs in which the various principles and theories developed for educational purposes are implied (qtd. in Eslami and Fatahi 1). Following the same idea, O'Malley states that the successful achievement of the learning process may be gradually influenced by the "teacher practices and perceptions" (qtd. in Griffiths 91).

Teachers have the task to choose what would help meet students' needs. This is what Eslami and Fatahi claim about the importance of analyzing teacher's perceptions on their strategies. "Thus, knowing about the perceptions and beliefs of teachers enables one to make predictions about teaching and assessment practices in classrooms" (2).

The results obtained in the analysis of the aforementioned interviews will contribute to an overview of the perceptions of teachers who work in public high



schools in Cuenca on their methodologies. Certainly, these results could have implications for the English Major and authorities in our Faculty.

1.3. Delimitation of the Problem

“A Qualitative Analysis of the EFL Teachers’ Perceptions on their Teaching Strategies in Public High Schools in Cuenca” aims to explore what teachers perceive regarding their strategies and the concepts used in the teaching process, which seem to be misunderstood by some English teachers.

This study is tied to a previous exploratory research carried out by Calle et al. in Cuenca, in 2012, sponsored by DIUC, which shows that the participants, some teachers who work in public high schools in Cuenca, misunderstand some of the academic terms regarding strategies, objectives or activities. In order to illustrate this problem, some quotations taken from the interviews are provided:

The teachers confuse skills with strategies: “mi estrategia favorite es speaking...”

There exists confusion between objectives and skills development: “lección está basada en el listening ... y las dos primeras tareas eran de listening...”

There is an emphasis on gramatical objectives: “los objetivos... de mi clase fueron que ellas diferencien entre como un adjetivo puede transformarse en un sustantivo para escribir oraciones.” (Calle et al. 13-14)

The researchers have analyzed some information from these interviews. However, a deep analysis of all the fifty-four (54) interviews has not been conducted, so this study aims to analyze and provide results regarding teachers’ perceptions. In other words, this proposal focuses on exploring a problem, which



has not been investigated yet and needs to be analyzed since its results can shed light over teaching strategies and its implications in the classroom.

1.4. Objectives

1.4.1. General

- ✓ To determine EFL Teachers' Perceptions regarding their Teaching Strategies in Public High Schools in Cuenca.

1.4.2. Specific

- ✓ To analyze the EFL Teachers' Perceptions on their Teaching Strategies by examining deeply five (5) out of fifty-four (54) interviews.
- ✓ To reflect on the information implied on the interviews and derive conclusions.
- ✓ To report the results in order to contribute with information to EFL trainers, prospective teachers, and researchers.



CHAPTER II

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. General Terms

Before giving some theoretical support to the present study, it is worth defining the concepts of some terms regarding the learning process, which will be studied along with this research. In the justification of this study, it was established that there are some terms that teachers seem to misunderstand and misuse regarding the educational field. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it is important to state the conceptions related to teaching strategies, which will be used in this research. In fact, teachers' perceptions regarding their teaching strategies will be analyzed; that is why a background of teaching strategies will be mentioned here firstly.

2.1.1. Approach, Method, and Strategy

The terms, approach, method, and strategy compose a whole entity, which can not be separated since they are linked to each other. In fact, the strategies that will be analyzed in the current study are part of such entity. Brown mentions in his book *Teaching by Principles* that the terms approach, method, and strategy have been reformulated.

Brown, citing Edward Anthony, defines the term, approach, as the various thoughts and beliefs instructors have regarding the essentials of the language itself and both the teaching-learning process. The same author defines methods as the holistic scheme established on a specific approach, which allows the language to be systematically introduced. Anthony (qtd. in Brown 14), also states that technique is a hierarchical term, which has its foundations on a method



previously defined in an approach. Following the same idea, Brown states that a technique can be defined as the selected activity that could be put into practice during the class time (14).

In short, the definitions given by Brown will be presented as follows:

- ✓ An approach refers to the positions and beliefs, which are based on scientific theories. Also, it refers to the essence of the language itself and the language learning process, as well as the applicable possibilities to the education field (17).
- ✓ Method can be defined as the whole overview of the “set of classroom specifications,” which help the teacher achieve the language aims (17).
- ✓ Technique refers to the activities, tasks, and exercises that allow the achievement of the lesson aims (17). Also, Brown defines technique as a group of activities that the learners or the instructor develops during the class time. Most of the time, the teacher previously selects and plans the activity before she presents it to the class. The activities will depend on the type of learning the teacher will direct, either focusing on the teacher or on the learner, or on a specific skill (180). According to Brown, there are two kinds of techniques such as manipulative and communicative. He states that the manipulative strategies are those for which the teacher has complete control of, and the answers are already planned. For instance, he mentions choral repetition, and substitution drills, and dictation and reading aloud. Contrary to these techniques, the communicative ones are available for teachers. In this case learners can freely answer, and their answers are completely unknown. Students are allowed to contribute with their own knowledge, and the guidance of the teacher is



valuable and necessary for their learning development. For instance, “storytelling, brainstorming, role plays, certain games, etc.” are among the well-known ones. Brown makes a remarkable contribution to this study when stating that for a long time it was thought the manipulative strategies were used for exclusively low level learners to whom communicative strategies were not appropriate since in such levels they were not able to truly interact. However, Brown highlights the real dimension of the communicative opportunities from the very beginning of the class period, which was proposed by the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (181).

- ✓ Other authors (Echavarria, Vogt, and Short) state that teaching strategies may be defined as the “structure, system, methods, techniques, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction” (qtd. in Sarkar 164). Such strategies are applied by the teacher in order to help students acquire the target language. In addition, Sarkar claims that teachers must carefully choose or develop the “teaching strategies and learning activities” taking into consideration that the four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) must be developed (164-165).

The aforementioned conceptions give an insight into whether an approach, method or technique can be used in any of the two well-known educational practices, traditional or communicative. It is also known that traditional education that endured between the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century encompasses strategies that demand few or little work from teachers and great memory capacity from students. Contrary to this situation, the Communicative Approach was proposed in order to overcome the problems learners had to face



during the learning process. This new kind of education has allowed the implementation and use of different strategies.

As the current study aims to research teachers' perceptions on their teaching strategies, an overview of the methods will be presented as they are the foundations for every strategy. Also, it is important to know some of the principles each method is based on, as well as the use of the strategy in each method. Then, it will be possible to compare the written theory with the factual perceptions teachers have on their teaching strategies.

2.2. Traditional Education

2.2.1. The Grammar Translation Method

According to Gouin, the Grammar Translation Method is based on memorization and reading proficiency aims. This method is based on the Classical Method, which was used to teach Latin and Greek, and "how to speak a language" (qtd. in Brown 18).

Prator and Celce-Murcia provide the principles of the method.

1. Teachers use L1 most of the time instead of an interactive use of L2.
2. The lexicon is taken apart in lists and learned.
3. Emphasis on complex grammar explanations.
4. Grammar teaching focuses on the structure of the language, and the learning process on the morphology of words.
5. Complex readings are given for low level learners.
6. The exercises are taken from the texts, and students must analyze them.
7. Drills for translation are used.
8. Pronunciation is not highly taken into consideration (qtd. in Brown 18).



2.2.1.1. Strategies

The following strategies or techniques were taken from *Teaching and Principles in Language Teaching* by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson.

2.2.1.1.1. Translation of Literary Passage: This technique requires learners to translate from L2 into their L1. The teacher gives a passage to students, and the information seen in the passage is useful to teach new words and structural patterns. Literary works can not be included, but the teacher can prepare some material, which contains new words or structural patterns. Students can present the translation either written, orally or both. Parts of speech such as idioms should not be translated; instead, students must be asked to write an equivalent meaning, which allows them to understand its idea (20).

2.2.1.1.2. Memorization: Learners have to memorize groups of L2 new words with their L1 translations. They must also memorize structural patterns and other parts of speech (22).

2.2.1.1.3. Use Words in Sentences: Learners are asked to write sentences using the new item in order to see their comprehension of such words (22).

2.2.2. The Direct Method

Richards and Rodgers provide some of the main principles the method instills.

1. L2 is mainly used during the learning process.
2. The speaking skill is enhanced through interaction between teacher-student.
3. Induction is used to teach grammar points.
4. Teachers use models and make students practice.



-
5. Teachers focus on accuracy of pronunciation and grammar points (qtd. in Brown 21).

2.2.2.1. Strategies

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson provide the following strategies:

2.2.2.1.1. Reading Aloud: One by one, learners read loudly a piece of information. After the whole class has finished reading the information, the teacher uses any other material to help students understand the information (32).

2.2.2.1.2. Paragraph Writing: Students are asked to write a paragraph on a topic, which has been previously studied (33).

2.2.3. The Audio Lingual Method

1. Repetition drills are used to teach the structure of the language.
2. "Tapes, language labs, and visual aids" are mostly used.
3. Pronunciation is highly important.
4. Teachers are allowed to use L1 as the last resource for communication (Brown 28).

2.2.3.1. Strategies

2.2.3.1.1. Drill: According to Brown, a drill may be defined as a strategy that involves repetition of some patterns of the language. Learners can repeat the drill in chorus or one by one (182).

2.2.3.1.2. Mechanical Drill: The teacher presents isolated and non-contextual examples to be repeated by the learners who have to give a unique answer (Brown 183).

2.2.3.1.3. Repetition Drill: The teacher gives a model, which learners have



to repeat rapidly and as exactly as the teacher does. This strategy is mostly used to teach short pieces of information from a dialogue (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 47). It also requires the compulsory repetition of an utterance no matter if the learner understands it or not (Brown 183). Brown establishes that when using repetition drills, learners need to repeat after the teacher a short piece of information orally without any printed aid. It is primarily considered sound, form, and order of the words (60).

2.3. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

2.3.1. The Communicative Approach

The basis of this approach states that the language is mainly acquired for communication purposes, which includes that learners will become fluent. The use of real life situations is one of the central characteristics of this approach in which the teacher becomes a guide instead of an authoritarian figure (Brown 47).

2.3.1.1. Strategies

2.3.1.1.1. Authentic Material: Teachers use realia, such as the elements of the classroom, or other things that students can touch or see clearly as the concrete illustration of the abstract meaning of an object (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 126).

2.3.1.1.2. Information-gap: This strategy is generally applied for adults, and it encompasses several strategies, which mainly involve asking and answering questions in order to obtain information. This technique includes two main features (1) information is the main aim rather than the form of the language used, (2) exchange of information between or among learners is necessary to achieve the aim of the task. Learners can use either simple or complex information



to complete the task (Brown 233). According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, an information-gap task is also called the information-gap activity, which involves the interchange of information regarding a topic. Therefore, students need to interact among themselves in order to get the correct and sufficient information to fulfill the class work. For example, a student has to ask questions in order to complete a timetable. Another task could be that one of the students has to draw a picture, which is described by other learners (158).

2.3.1.1.3. Opinion-gap Task: Learners are asked to utter their priorities, emotions, and positions when completing a class work. For example, learners can write on potential solutions for some problems the teacher will give them (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 158). It is important to mention that this strategy was adapted from the Task-Based Language Approach.

2.3.1.1.4. Language Games: Besides helping learners to enjoy the class, this strategy provides valuable situations for students to communicate in the L2. Morrow states that games provide purely communication opportunities as they have the information-gap activities, the choice step, and the feedback opportunity. When playing a game, students do not know what the other student is going to say (information-gap). Then, the other student has to choose an answer (choice). Then if the answer is correct, the other learner will understand the message; otherwise, the other learners will correct the learner who is asking the question (feedback) (qtd. in Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 127). Sarkar states that games may be used by teachers to strengthen the learner's knowledge. Students can enjoy by learning, and games can come in different styles such as "matching, mysteries,



group or individual competitions, and puzzles, or [...] Pictionary, Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Family Feud, Clue, and Scrabble” (173).

2.3.1.1.5. Role Play: This strategy is used in order to make students practice by using different situations and taking different roles. The roles can be selected by the teacher or by the student giving the chance students to choose most of the time (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 127-128). Similar to this definition, Sarkar claims that role playing requires that learners play a role depending on the topic they have learned. "Problem-solving and decision-making skills" can be shown by using this strategy. The time for preparation and for looking for more information for the role play depends on the subject matter the students are learning (178).

2.3.1.1.6. Warm-up: Involves “a short, fun game, which a teacher or trainer can use with their students.” This is an activity that can be used at the beginning of the class in order to prepare students’ minds for the target language. Also, a warm-up activity should be accomplished in about five (5) minutes. Finally, this kind of activity is appropriate to help students know each other, or to start another class issue (“Ideas for warm up activities” 138).

2.3.1.1.7. Group Work: This is a macro-strategy because it involves several strategies. It involves a pair or more learners, who have to accomplish a class work by collaborating with each other and contributing with their own language knowledge. Peer work is also part of the group work strategies just as the “small-group work” strategy. It would be better if learners were grouped in no more than six people. Otherwise, if learners work in larger groups the communicative purposes will probably not be achieved (Brown 224). Thinking of



advantages, Sarkar states that group work brings learners the possibility of expressing their thoughts to others, as well as working socially since each learner must collaborate with the group to fulfill the assignment. This strategy commonly involves reading articles, answering questions and discussing issues, sharing data, and teaching topics to others, developing some projects, solving problems, and making decisions. Also, it is useful to change students' roles (173-174).

2.3.2. Advantages of Using Group Work

Brown mentions some of the advantages that the group work strategy can provide to the learners during the L2 learning process.

- ✓ **“Group work generates interactive language:”** Long and Porter manifested that this strategy is truly helpful for classes, which have a big group of students giving them the chance to express their thoughts. It is also possible to have “quantity” and “quality” of communication in the class. Small groups give learners the opportunity to participate in the group as members of it and interact among the other students (qtd. in Brown 225).
- ✓ **“Group work offers an embracing affective climate:”** It is commonly seen that some students are not confident enough when speaking in front of large audiences, so working in small groups helps learners become more secure to speak and use the language. The author also mentions that learners feel more motivated in small groups (225).
- ✓ **“Group work promotes learner responsibility and autonomy:”** The author mentions that small group work keeps learners from not being taken into consideration during a task. In fact, learners must work hard and be responsible in their roles (225).



- ✓ **“Group work is the step toward individualizing instruction:”** The teacher should select the members of the group taking into consideration their differences and assigning them different tasks (226).

2.3.3. Reasons to Avoid Using Group Work in Class

There are some factors, which keep teachers from not using group or small group work because they argue that some problems regarding the management of the class will occur. However, Brown claims that these are only myths because such problems can be overcome by the appropriate application of the group work strategy.

- ✓ **“The teacher is no longer in control of the class:”** The control the teacher has of the students will depend on some class features, which the following conditions will illustrate:
- teaching in an institution where the administrator in charge requires that you teach through a traditional, whole-class methodology,
 - teaching in a culture where “good teaching” is defined as students quietly working in orderly fashion, speaking only when spoken to by the teacher,
 - teaching very large classes (of 75 or more) where a plethora of small groups becomes difficult to manage,
 - teaching a group of unruly students-possibly of secondary school age-where discipline is a major issue,
 - yourself a non-native speaker of English without the confidence to “let your students go” in small groups, (226)

When students work in groups, it is a must for the teacher to control and to



guide learners during the task. This strategy can not be introduced suddenly; instead, it needs to be procedurally implemented into the teaching strategies (226-227).

- ✓ **“Students will use their native language:”** This situation occurs mostly in classes in which all students share a common native language. Also, students are more probable to use L1 when there are unclear instructions; there is not a valued challenge in the task, and there is not enough motivation. However, an appropriate environment will help learners work in groups (227).
- ✓ **“Students’ errors will be reinforced in small groups:”** In response to this, the authors Long, Porter, and McDonough, state that research has been completed on this topic, and the results have shown that students were accurate enough either when working in controlled classes or when working freely. In fact, errors are part of the L2 learning process (qtd. in Brown 228).
- ✓ **“Teachers cannot monitor all groups at once:”** It is not necessary that the teacher is aware of every single idea the students have, but teachers have to suggest and amend the students’ work, when needed. The learner also has to contribute in the development of the assignment with his own ideas (228).
- ✓ **“Some learners prefer to work alone:”** Adults would rather work alone since they have worked in that way since their first years in school. The teacher should motivate the learners by giving reasons for communicating with others. In fact, learning a language is for communication purposes, so working in groups allows learners to develop their communicative skills better than in isolation (228).



2.4. Learning Objectives

Some authors (Ames et al.; Fodor, Dalis and Giarratano; Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock; Echevarria, Vogt, and Short) claim that the learning objectives ought to be the guidance for the learning process. The same authors state that “learning objectives provide the instructional target for both the teacher and the student (167).” According to the same scholars, teachers should carefully select and apply the strategies and activities that best suit the students’ needs to achieve the learning objectives (qtd. in Sarkar 166-167).

Richards and Rodgers state that some teachers establish objectives that are directed to accomplish goals that have their main focus on the language, and others establish objectives centered in the way students must act depending on what they have learned. It can be inferred from these authors’ ideas that the objectives demonstrate which kind of methods teachers will use in their classes either traditional or communicative ones (24).

2.5. Learning Activities

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, an activity may be defined as “an educational process or procedure intended to stimulate learning through actual experience” (“Activity”). Another author, Kaptelinin, explains that an activity is made up of “goal-directed actions that must be undertaken to fulfill the object.” Along the same lines, Sarkar called “learning activities” the “teacher-guided instructional tasks or assignments for students.” A list of activities written by Aduwc and Razalexander and published in the web page of the *University of the Western Cape* will be presented.

2.5.1. Concept Mapping: This is an activity that can be used even with



advanced learners, and this tool helps learners discover the relationship among concepts. Also, this activity is an aid for students since it helps them be aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. This activity is helpful for both teachers and students since teachers can become aware of the type of feedback they need to give their students.

2.5.2. Questioning: This is a useful tool to engage students. For instance, the Socratic Method applies questions depending on the topics and contexts; that is why teachers are able to be aware of the level of knowledge their pupils have, and the areas where they need more practice in.

2.5.3. Free-writing: This is an activity by which learners can reflect and write about their reflections. Students can write something briefly on a short topic or answer a question. In addition, these writings can be done at any time of the class, and students' productions can be kept by themselves, or the teacher can collect them, as well. Such students' writings can help the teacher be aware of the students' factual knowledge.

2.6. Language Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skill

Teaching strategies are linked to the language learning skills. Brown defines a skill as the "expertise, ability or competence," which enables learner to achieve school tasks or empirical tasks (qtd. in UKEssays.com). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language states a skill as "a developed talent or ability" ("Skill"). Moreover, within a language classroom, there are four (4) language skills, which will be defined below.

2.6.1. Listening Skill: According to Thomlison Listening may be called as



“active listening, which is very important for effective communication” (qtd. in TutorVista.com). Sakuma defines Listening as an essential skill during the process of acquiring any type of knowledge, which involves, “hearing, understanding, and judging.” This skill has two main aims, which are to keep the interaction among people, and to communicate the intended information (qtd. in Flohr and Paesler 3).

2.6.2. Speaking Skill: According to SIL International, the Speaking skill may be defined as “the productive skill in the oral mode,” which is also considered to be a complex skill. Following the same idea, Nunan states that “speaking is the productive oral skill.” It demands the production of “systematic verbal utterance” that helps communicate the message (qtd. in LêThịHồngPhúc 16).

2.6.3. Reading Skill: “Reading is the receptive skill in the written mode,” which depending on the level of culture of the society in which it develops can grow together with the other skills such as Listening and Speaking or by itself. Vocabulary can be built through reading, which may be an aid for listening comprehension for more advanced learners (SIL International).

2.6.4. Writing Skill: “Writing is the productive skill in the written mode.” It does not only include the “graphic representation of the spoken” word, but also the organization and arrangement of thoughts. Moreover, it seems to be the most complicated skill even for native speakers (SIL International).

2.7 What is a Perception?

Perceptions have been defined by Allport as the judgment given by people to each other, which can be determined by the way people behave towards an idea or object (qtd. in Etuk et al. 197). Relating the given concept to the current study, it can be stated that perception is the judgment teachers provide to their own



strategies, which show the reaction towards it. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration what teachers perceive about their own strategies to determine whether they use the strategies appropriately or not, or the kind of relation teachers could have with the strategies applied in class. Also, Allport states that the impression teachers have towards their strategies could determine whether they are in favor of using such strategy. Therefore, teachers would give positive or negative perceptions on the strategies they judge to be effective to teach the target language.



CHAPTER III

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3. 1. Studies on Teachers' Perceptions

Several studies have been carried out around the world regarding teachers' perceptions. Such studies provide insights to carry out local research, which attempts to analyze several teaching strategies. Since it is an exploratory research, it is unknown which strategies may be found. However, it is important to have an overview of the results of some studies that will be provided hereafter.

3.1.1. STUDY 1: Translation Strategy

In a study carried out by Asgarian, in Turkey in 2012, sponsored by Eastern Mediterranean University, regarding teachers' perceptions of their translation strategies, the participants were chosen purposely in order to collect qualified data. They were experienced teachers, who were pursuing a PH.D degree in ELT at Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus and Iran. The group of participants was composed of five (5) females and four (4) males whose ages were between 28 to 45. Semi-structured interviews containing a group of open-ended questions were applied to collect the data, which were analyzed through content analysis (923).

In this study, the results show that the participants mostly explained the reasons for using L1 and/or L2 in the class. Also, teachers did not agree in using L1 in class; instead, they were positive in using L2. Most of the participants claimed that the "type of dictionary bilingual or monolingual used by learners could cause significant language learning or not." That is why teachers finally stated that



using monolingual dictionaries can be useful for students to increase the length of their vocabulary.

Then, teachers mentioned some reasons why they use L1 in their EFL classes such as “the lack of equivalence,” “the case of teaching complicated grammatical points,” “the mother tongue should be used at lower levels of proficiency,” and the “lack of teachers’ proficiency in the target language” (924).

Also, teachers claimed that students could take advantage of the use of L1/L2 and gain knowledge (924). Five out of nine participants stated that they switched from L2 into L1 to help their students understand the grammar points. Two out of nine participants claimed that the mother tongue could be used with very basic learners. However, the majority of teachers claimed that the use of the L2 may help learners enrich their language knowledge. The other two teachers thought that it could not be truly helpful for basic learners. Surprisingly, in general, teachers believed that they could stop using L1 in their classes. Furthermore, it was found that teachers thought that translation should be used by students by means of exercises, which demanded that students have equivalences in both the L1 and L2 (925-926). Most of the participants stated that, in some cases, students could gain in the learning process development by using translation. Furthermore, four teachers highlighted the most important element when translating, which involved transmitting the message. Finally, teachers stated that word-for-word translation is not useful for advanced learners, but it could be beneficial for lower learners (926-927).



3.1.2. STUDY 2: Motivational Strategies

Another study carried out by an Indonesian researcher, Rachmania Bachtiar Kassing, in a private university located in Sulawesi Island had as its participants its pre-service teachers, and EFL lecturers, who work in an English Education Department. The data for this study were collected by applying focus group discussions, as well as individual semi-structured interviews applied to EFL lecturers that contained 6 questions (34-38). Later, the researcher applied qualitative methodology and a case study to analyze the data (52).

3.1.2.1. Main Findings Regarding Motivational Strategies

After it has been given the methodology, the main findings taken from the study related to motivational strategies will be mentioned in a general overview.

Pre-service teachers and lecturers believed that positive attitudes from both sides could help build a good rapport (57). It was also found that lecturers believed that it was necessary to appreciate students, what they think and say (58). Moreover, lecturers believed that making mistakes comes naturally when learning a language. Some teachers used communal feedback, but others had the idea that peer reviewing could help better their students keep them from falling into unnecessary embarrassments (60).

Furthermore, some other strategies emerged from the interviews. For instance, the lecturers claimed that they believed in peer work as a helpful tool for their students because it demanded that learners cooperate with their peers and make an effort to fulfill the task. Some lecturers stated that it was somewhat difficult for them to include a variety of strategies as it would mean more time to be spent on this. A lecturer claimed that the practicing strategy was a successful one



in order to teach grammar (67). Lecturers were extremely sure that being a good model for their pupils would be helpful for the development of their command of the language (65). In addition, the participants believed that teachers had to encourage their pupils to develop the speaking skills during the EFL classes since they could be crucial for their language acquisition.

Once the main findings from the study have been given, the results of what teachers perceive from their strategies will be established afterwards.

3.1.2.2. Main Findings on Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Teaching Strategies

In this study, it was found that teachers mainly mentioned teaching strategies such as “encouraging grammar mastery, knowing the student-teachers’ prior knowledge, memorization and process-oriented teaching.” Each strategy will be explained as follows.

First of all, lecturers mentioned that it was important to focus on grammar, so they encouraged the learners to be grammar masters. In fact, “70 % of the English national test” is composed by grammar points. Nowadays, to be accepted in a University in Indonesia, students need to pass different test such as the TOEFL, which is mostly composed of grammar issues.

In the second point, lecturers claimed that by “knowing the student-teachers’ prior knowledge” teachers would be aware of the material the learners have already mastered, and what they needed to acquire and practice (74-75).

In the third place, “memorizing” was applied by lecturers in order to help



their learners master English, comprehend and memorize concepts related to “sociolinguistic theory,” and memorizing was used as a tool for teaching reading. Lecturers argued that by memorizing learners acquired new words better.

In the last place, one out of the five lecturers stated that he applied “process-oriented teaching.” According to this lecturer, teachers must focus on the whole process instead of only the final product. The lecturer worked with group discussion in the classes, and he took into consideration mostly the opinions learners expressed and not only how accurately they could speak (76).

Finally, the researcher suggested that EFL teachers have to select the strategies that best fit their students’ necessities and feelings towards their teachers’ strategies, and depending on the context they are involved in to take advantage of them (124).

3.1.3. STUDY 3: Motivational Strategies: Korean Secondary Teachers’ Perceptions

Another study carried out by Guilloteaux in Korea in 2013, sponsored by Gyeongsang National University, mentions some findings on teachers’ perceptions regarding motivational teaching strategies. The participants were English teachers of secondary schools, who were randomly chosen from genders, sixty-nine (69) male and one hundred-ninety-nine (199) female teachers. The researcher used and directed the “two survey questionnaires featuring identical lists of forty-eight (48) motivational strategies derived from D ó rnyei’s [...] comprehensive and practical framework for a motivational teaching practice” to collect the data.

In this study, it was found that there were seven macro-strategies that were



perceived by teachers as the highest ranked among the total, which will be mentioned as follows:

“Display appropriate teacher behaviors” by being aware of students learning development, which is a potential instrument, by being enthusiastic, and by providing a good rapport towards students, teachers can display a proper behavior (Guilloteaux, par. 1).

“Encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation” suggests that teachers had two conceptions in mind regarding this strategy which are “ (1) they can help students appraise and react to their past performances in an adaptive way; and (2) that the way students process their past actions largely determines the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue later” (Guilloteaux, par. 2).

“Encourage students to try harder” is a strategy that teachers mentioned as a beneficial one for students since they could obtain benefits from the effort they made (Guilloteaux, par. 3).

“Present and select tasks properly” was based on the teachers’ perceptions that the methodology they applied in class was extremely essential. Teachers believed that learners needed to be aware of the level of knowledge they were about to acquire, and teachers had to select activities according to the learners’ level, neither higher nor lower (Guilloteaux, par. 4).

“Model enthusiasm for English” in which teachers stated that to love the teaching profession is fairly more important than being enthusiastic about the language, English. Another strategy that was found is “act naturally in front of students,” which refers to the fact that teachers believed that they could establish



a more formal or personal relationship with their students that could help them to motivate students (Guilloteaux, par. 5).

The strategy, “Teach students learning strategies” was not necessary according to the participants. They stated that to teach their pupils learning strategies did not influence the learners’ motivation (Guilloteaux, par. 7).

“Help students design individual study plans” was one of the lowest voted strategy since it was difficult for teachers to adapt different lesson plans due to the large number of students of 32 pupils (Guilloteaux, par. 8).

“Create an accepting, friendly classroom climate and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms” was not positively accepted by the participants (Guilloteaux, par. 9).

Unfortunately, “Enhance the learner’s awareness of the values associated with the knowledge of the L2” was chosen as the last one in importance (Guilloteaux, par. 10).

“Make learning stimulating and enjoyable” was perceived as a not important strategy in terms of a motivational instrument (Guilloteaux, par. 11).

“Promote learners autonomy” was the lowest voted strategy since teachers believed that it could not be useful to motivate learners, or the application of the strategy could present some level of difficulty, as well (Guilloteaux, par. 12).

3.2. Reflection on the Three (3) Studies

In conclusion, as it can be observed along these studies, most of the participants use traditional strategies instead of communicative ones.

For instance, in the first study, teachers agreed in using L1 in some cases,



and they thought that learners could take advantage of the use of the translation strategy such as word-for- word translation, especially for lower proficiency learners. Fortunately, most of the teachers mentioned that L2 could help students in the learning process, and they believed that using translation should not be used anymore in their classes.

In addition, in the second study, the majority of the teachers applied traditional strategies such as memorizing. Also, students have to master the grammar issues since teachers argued that students need to pass tests (TOEFL) that are mostly composed of grammar issues. However, it is commonly known that the TOEFL test is composed of grammar and of comprehension points mostly. In addition, teachers mentioned that memorizing is used to learn reading, and to acquire more vocabulary. Meanwhile, it is generally known that, in fact, Reading is a skill that must be developed, and that by memorizing the readings, the learner will not be able to develop comprehension. What teachers must focus on is the extent of understanding the L2 learners are able to achieve, and not only how much they can memorize from it. Actually, by memorizing vocabulary, it does not mean that learners will expand their lexicon, and the information can be stored long term. Lastly, only one teacher used communicative strategies and focused on communication first.

Finally, in the third study, something similar occurred when teachers mentioned the use of teacher-centered strategies because the majority of them voted for strategies that highlighted their work as teachers, (appropriate behavior, proper selection of tasks, modeling enthusiasm when teaching English). It is worth mentioning that presenting the right tasks for learners is a positive strategy;



however, minor ranked strategies are related to students' school development. For instance, teach students learning strategies, help students establish their own study plans, establish a positive class environment, show students how valuable the knowledge of the target language can be, motivate learners, and help learners become more independent are all strategies that were not seen by teachers as important as they really are. However, such strategies can help students in their metacognitive development; that is learn-how-to-learn.

3.3. Various Authors' Results

As a concluding point, it is worth mentioning the following results of some authors relating traditional strategies, which are important to be taken into consideration because such results are connected with this study. Following the same idea, in the previous study carried out by Calle et al., sponsored by the DIUC at the University of Cuenca, which was an insight for this one, it was already mentioned that most teachers used traditional strategies. In fact, the content of the interviews of the current study demonstrate that the participants mostly referred to the use of traditional strategies in the learning process. According to some authors (Telljohann, Symons, and Pateman; Anspaugh and Ezell; Meeks, Heit, and Page), teachers still apply non-communicative teaching strategies instead of communicative ones. The following quotes are examples of this situation:

1. If I spend time in class on active learning exercises, I will never get through the health education content that I am expected to cover.
2. If I do not lecture, I will lose control of the class.
3. I have difficulty getting my students to work in teams. Some students do all the work and some do none at all. How do I grade them?



4. My students do not know how to deal with higher-level questions. They just want to give simple, low-level answers.
5. My students do not like active learning; they would rather just listen and take notes.
6. I have some special education and ELL students in class. I do not know what to do with them during group or other active learning activities. (qtd. in Sarkar 165-166)

3.4. Previous Studies versus the Current Study

In the previous studies there are some aspects that should be considered and contrasted when carrying out the current study.

- ✓ In the studies carried out by Amir Asgarian and Rachmania Bachtiar Kassing, the participants were about five (5) to nine (9) members. Only in the study conducted by Guilloteaux, there were two hundred-eight (208) participants because they had to fill in a questionnaire about the strategies. However, five (5) teachers participated in the current study.
- ✓ Also, in the previous studies, the participants were EFL lecturers, university teachers, and in one case secondary teachers. Meanwhile, in this research the participants were English teachers, who work in public high schools. This factor can influence the comparison of the results of the other investigations with the results of the current study since the context in each one varies.
- ✓ It is important to mention that in the previous studies teachers did not have any problems when answering the questions. However, in some of the interviews of the current study, it was seen that, the teachers were confused when referring to some terms regarding the educational field. For example, some teachers



misunderstood the term “skills” versus “objectives” and “strategies”. An illustration of this situation is the following quote taken from one (1) out of the fifty-four (54) interviews.

Interviewer: “¿Cuáles eran los objetivos de la clase?”

I 1¹: “Listening and Speaking.”

This following quote is another example of how the teacher misunderstood the term “strategy” with “skill.”

Interviewer: “¿Cuáles son las estrategias que más le gustan utilizar en sus clases?”

I2: “Bien las estrategias que más utilizo en clase son Reading, Writing eh mm... porque el Speaking, no, no tenemos como le dije anteriormente, no tenemos la preparación suficiente para poder hablar. Entonces, ocupo siempre Listening, también sí, Listening ocupo las 3 destrezas que utilizo más y el Speaking lo dejo un poquito a lado.”

However, it is clearly seen that later on, the participant referred properly to Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing as skills and not as strategies. This may be possible since the teacher could have realized that she was talking about the skills rather than the strategies without taking into consideration that she was being asked about the strategies. It is worth mentioning that not all the information of these interviews will be analyzed as only the information that is being quoted is relevant to argue about the misconceptions teachers have with some terms regarding the educational field.

¹ I1 stands for (Interviewee 1), who was part of the fifty-four (54) interviewees. Although, I1 was not a participant, his/her quotations were included since they were relevant for illustration purposes in the analysis.



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- ✓ In addition, in a previous study carried out by Guilloteaux 12 macro-strategies were considered, but this study will take into account more specific traditional and communicative strategies.
 - ✓ In two of the three previous studies, the researchers used semi-structured interviews and in one of them, researchers used a survey in which the strategies were already established, and the information was more specific. However, for the current study an open interview was used and information of fifty-four (54) high school teachers was collected. Since an open interview was used and a wide range of information was collected, for the purpose of this current study, it was necessary to group the interviews and choose the ones, which could provide information regarding teachers' perceptions on their teaching strategies to be deeply analyzed.



CHAPTER IV

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Participants

The participants of the current study were chosen purposely from a group of fifty-four (54) EFL teachers, who work in public high schools located in the urban area of Cuenca-Ecuador. The participants chosen for this research were five (5) in-service teachers, three (3) females and two (2) males, between forty (40) to sixty (60) years old, who teach in the evening and afternoon sessions. The majority of the participants have more than ten (10) years of experience in the teaching profession.

4.2. Instruments

4.2.1. Instruments for Data Collection

The current study used the information, which was a product of an open interview. It contained a set of ten (10) open-ended questions designed by the researchers and applied to fifty-four (54) teachers after the observation of a class hour (Calle et al. 7). To collect reliable data the interview was conducted in Spanish, and in a few cases interviewees and interviewers code switched to English.²

4.2.2. Instruments for the Analysis

Then, the data were selected purposely for further content analysis by using

² The interviewees felt comfortable answering in Spanish. In order to clearly demonstrate interviewees' opinions, and to respect their right to choose the language, their quotes were transcribed in the language they used. Most of the time, teachers used their native language, Spanish, and in a less extent they used the target language, English. To present the quotation in the actual language used by the interviewee makes the information even more reliable. In fact, it shows the raw data exactly, as were stated by the participants.



the software ATLAS.ti. The official web page “Scientific Software Development GmbH.” refers to qualitative analysis as the interpretation of textual data. It allows collecting a variety of responses and the adaptation of newly proposed processes, while doing the analysis. The software ATLAS.ti is a tool that allows the researcher to prepare, code, and analyze data in a qualitative way (nerdgeschoss GmbH).

In the software ATLAS.ti, the qualitative method was coding, which is an interpretive technique. This technique allows the researcher to arrange the data and to prepare it for the interpretation process. The data are arranged by using different codes. A code is “a word or short phrase,” which is used to identify each segment of the interviews. Within this coding process, the free code option is included. This option allows the researcher to use any code format to arrange the data, which could be numbers, letters, or a mixture of both. Also, there is available the option of coding by using existing codes. Any of the aforementioned options can be used to code the information of the interviews, which has been already read and divided into segments.

Then, the analysis and the report of the results can be done by using the tools the software ATLAS.ti provides (“Methods of Qualitative Data Analysis”) such as the code family option, the frequency table, and the network tool. The code family option allows the researcher to group similar codes regarding a topic. For example, the codes, **Strategies to Develop Speaking**, and **Strategies to Teach Grammar** are part of the topic “strategies.” In that way, the code family could be “**Strategies**”. Furthermore, the frequency table option helps the researcher know the rate of recurrence of the codes along the five (5) interviews. Finally, the network tool provides instruments to represent the relations among the information



of the interviews. Therefore, large quantities of information can be visualized through the networks.

4.3. Data Selection

4.3.1. Brief Analysis of the Fifty-four (54) Interviews

After doing a brief analysis of the fifty-four (54) interviews, it was found that there are some reasons why the participants gave very brief answers. That is why some interviews were not chosen for the analysis. Following, one can notice the most important causes, which hindered teachers in answering appropriately.

4.3.1.1. Nervousness

In some cases, it seems that interviewees were nervous. In fact, in some interviews, there was evidence that indicated that there were some internal conditions that prevented teachers from answering appropriately, giving reasons, or mistaking some terms. Such conditions were indicated by the presence of hesitations, or explicit statements of some participants mentioning that they were nervous during the interviews. Besides the internal factors, there were also some external conditions or factors that influenced teachers. For instance, it could be that teachers had some ideas in mind. Nevertheless, since they were being recorded by strange people, they could not feel confident or comfortable. **I2** mentioned the following:

“Estoy bastante nerviosa; es que la primera vez me hacen esto.”

4.3.1.2. Lack of Preparation

Lack of preparation was another factor that did not help teachers during the interviews. It may be inferred that the participants gave such answers as they were not aware that they were going to be interviewed. In fact, some of them pointed



out that they did not know about it. However, this factor increases the reliability of the study since teachers had to answer what they really knew without any previous revision of the material they were going to be asked about.

Teachers mixed their ideas up because while they were talking about some issues, they started talking about different ones. It may be caused due to a psychological effect since they tried to talk and show the interviewers that they knew the answers. Also, one can say that teachers were not prepared for such questions, so they changed their minds when giving their opinions as can be seen in the following example.

Interviewer: “En su experiencia, ¿Considera útil enseñar gramática y por qué?”

I3: “Sí, porque es una experiencia. Así cuando hay, o sea uno al comienzo con los temas, pero hay partes de gramática. Entonces, ahí no se tiene que detener porque es importante que ellas. Por ejemplo, para que sepan el uso de, “do” o “does.” Por ejemplo, el uso de los verbos de las terceras personas.”

4.3.1.3. Ambiguity

In addition, it could be possible that the participants did not have a clear idea of what they were being asked about as in the following case .

Interviewer: “¿Y ahora mmm... hay alguna actividad que usted... que sea su preferida? ¿Alguna estrategia que usted siempre utilice?”

I4: “Trabajar en posters. Yo trabajo mucho en posters. Les fascina a ellas, claro el trabajo es para mí porque son ocho a diez posters por quimestre de



cada alumna. [...], pero veo que rinde efecto... del cantante favorito, de mi comida favorita...”

Also, teachers seem to answer because they had to, but they did not seem to know what the questions really meant. Others answered the questions, but they did not give more detailed information. In fact, some teachers gave answers that were related to part of the questions, but they did not answer the entire question. The fact that people always want to say something in response to an inquiry is a common reaction that is human nature, which pushes people to say something instead of keeping silent.

4.3.1.4. Familiarity

Probably, some teachers were not familiar with the terms used in the interviews. It could be that the participants were not in contact with the terms because it had been a long time since they left the University. In addition, some teachers did not give any argument to support their answers. It can be inferred that they did not know the strategy they were being asked about as in the case of the information-gap.

Interviewer: “¿Considera usted útiles las actividades de information-gap?”

I5: “No, o sea al menos en este libro no me, no me, no me da un poco de resultado porque o sea hay sinceramente, hay actividades que, o sea, o topics que a las chicas no les llama la atención.”

4.3.1.5. Teachers' needs

Also, teachers seem to take advantage of the interview in order to appeal for what they needed and to mention some of the problems they had in their profession. It is important to mention that some of the interviewers asked about the



necessities teachers had, but some teachers focused most of the time on mentioning the problems they had.

Interviewer: “Usted que habla ahora de traducción. ¿Usted considera que para poder chequear la comprensión de los estudiantes necesita traducir, o qué otra estrategia usa?”

I6: “A veces o cuando sea podemos usar señales mímicas. [...] Eso igual es muy lindo trabajar en este colegio. Es un muy bien ambiente, pero lo que si por ejemplo, no tenemos muchos recursos para el área de inglés, no tenemos laboratorios que sería algo esencial para ellos.”

Interviewer: “¿Tienen grabadoras?”

I6: “Si tenemos la grabadora, pero o sea igual unita para todos. Y si están utilizando las otras profesoras, nosotros ya nos limitamos e incluso hay un curso, por ejemplo que no tiene en donde enchufar. Entonces, no hay como hacerles por más que haya la grabadora. Entonces, es muy complicado en esos aspectos. Si sería bueno que hayan más recursos para que ellos tengan una mejor calidad de aprendizaje.”

4.3.1.6. Format of the Interviews

It was found that the interviewers did not follow a common format during the interviews. This may be because most of the interviews were done after the observations of some of the classes. Therefore, it was noted that most of the interviewers focused on some aspects regarding the observed classes and added more questions to their formats, and in a few cases, researchers applied the original format. Since teachers were interviewed after an observation, they could have expected to be asked about the class itself and not about other strategies or



questions the researchers prepared.³ In fact, the majority of the questions of the format for the interviews had closed-end questions in which only a few asked for more detailed information, which in some way limited the interviewees' answers. As the following examples, 1 and 2, illustrate.

Example 1.

Interviewer: “¿Y cuando usted les escribió la tabla con esos diferentes ítems, names, occupation y todo eso, ellos no tenían eso en el libro, no?”

I7: “No tienen de otra manera. [...]”

Interviewer: “Esa era una actividad suya, no estaba en el libro.”

I7: “Entonces, luego, ellos tienen otra, otra.”

Interviewer: “¿Actividad?”

I7: “Actividad, exacto, para completar que es acerca de la lectura, también entonces allí se reforzó.”

Interviewer: “Muy bien [...], una pregunta. [...] ¿Usted ahh... supongo que realiza también a veces actividades de interacción entre los estudiantes?”

Example 2.

Interviewer: “¿Cumple usted con las actividades planteadas para cada lección?”

I8: “Sí cumplo.”

Interviewer: “¿Qué estrategias de enseñanza son sus preferidas y por qué?”

I8: “Ya, utilizo flash cards, mira y contesta las preguntas de acuerdo a los flash cards, gramática, ordenar palabras.”

³ In fact, it is human nature to be prepared for something that had just been presented rather than for other aspects.



Interviewer: “¿Cuándo utiliza ejercicios orales y de repetición?”

I8: “Cuando enseño la gramática.”

These two examples show the difference between the formats of the interviews the researchers used to collect the data. In the first example, the researcher delves deeper on aspects of the observed class; however, in the second interview, the researcher follows the original format for the interview.

4.3.2. Selection of the Interviews

After this brief analysis, five (5) interviews were chosen for deeper analysis. It was previously mentioned that fifty-four (54) interviews will be analyzed; however, since the current research is a qualitative study, the quantity of the interviews is not relevant. In other words, numbers are not important; the depth of the analysis of the information provided by teachers is. The aforementioned literature review demonstrates that the group of participants of the studies was composed by no more than five (5) to nine (9) members as in the studies carried out by Amir Asgarian and Rachmania Bachtar Kassing. Therefore, the current study will analyze five (5) interviews.

4.3.2.1. Process of Selection

It is necessary to mention the process of selection of these five (5) interviews. First, a complex process of grouping fifty-eight (58) interviews was carried out. The work started when each of the fifty-eight (58) scripts of the interviews were copied and saved in a separate word document. Each document was named after every interviewee and numbered in alphabetical order. Then, the fifty-eight (58) interviews were read, and the topics they contained were registered in sixteen (16) pages. Also, four (4) interviews were deleted leaving fifty-four (54)



because they did not contain relevant information for this study. A chart was designed to register the different topics each interview contained. This chart was used to group the interviews by similar topics. We ended up with fifteen (15) groups of broad topics. Each group had a different number of interviews.

4.3.2.2. Checking the Grouping Process

After the chart of topics was complete, the fifty-four (54) interviews and the fifteen (15) files that contained the groups of topics were checked again to make sure that the topics and interviews were grouped appropriately. In some cases, it was necessary to change the topics of the interviews, and in other cases, some of them were deleted as they were part of other topics. After all the fifty-four (54) interviews were grouped in the fifteen (15) files and in the chart, every interview was read again to select the interviews that contained relevant information for the study.

4.3.2.3. Final Selection of the Interviews

In order to select the interviews, a new chart was created. This chart contained the number of the fifty-four (54) interviews, some comments regarding the information that was relevant for the study, and the reasons why some interviews were not chosen. The researcher proceeded to select the interviews according to the following criteria: quantity and quality of the information, length of the answers, and relevance of the information for the analysis. For example, the participants tried to talk about the subject matter, but for some reason they did not complete the idea. That is why it was necessary to do a deep reading and re-reading process to choose the most appropriate interviews, which could provide relevant information for the analysis. Finally, five (5) interviews were chosen.



4.3.2.4. Frequency of the Topics

As a crucial step, it was important to know which topics were mostly mentioned in the interviews. Therefore, a table was designed to make a list of the topics of the interviews and to get the percentages of the number of the topics the fifty-four (54) interviews had. Then, these interviews were checked again, and their numbers were written next to each topic in rows. Also, the frequency of the topics was considered, and the percentages were ranked helping in the visualization, which could be useful for the discrimination of the information, the analysis, and the conclusions.

4.4. Analysis:

The analysis of the five (5) interviews was carried out with the software ATLAS.ti, which allows us to analyze qualitative data. Therefore, the five (5) interviews were assigned to this software to be coded using the free code option. The interviews were read and thirty-two (32) codes were created by using numbers and words (See Annex 1). Then, these codes were included in five (5) code families (See Annex 2).

The conceptual work was carried out by using networks, which show the relationship among codes. Networks help with the visualization of the information in an organized way. Each interview was analyzed separately, and a network per each interview was designed allowing for five (5) networks in total (See Annexes 3-7). They were created focused on a code, and the most relevant quotations were added next to each code in order to illustrate important information. After the five (5) networks were ready, they were peer checked and corrected.

The software ATLAS.ti provides the advantage of establishing the



frequency table in which the thirty-two (32) codes with their rate of occurrence appear (See Annex 8). However, the ten (10) highest ranked codes (See page 60) were chosen to design the general network, which encloses the most relevant and common information among the five (5) interviews (See Annex 9).

It was mentioned that five (5) code families were created. So then, the three (3) highest ranked ones were chosen in order to finally design another network, which will be presented in the final report of the analysis (See Annex 10). Since the five (5) interviews had some information in common, it was convenient to present, only one (1) network that summarizes concrete and brief information about the highest ranked perceptions of these five (5) interviews, which heightened the results of the research (See page 62). Following this, the explanation of the information (analysis) is also added.



CHAPTER V

5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Frequency Table

In the process of discrimination of the raw data mentioned in the methodology, the following codes, listed at the left side of the table below, were established. Also, the number of the interviews is followed below by the frequency of each code, as well as its totals.

| FREQUENCY TABLE | | | | | | |
|--|------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| CODES | INTERVIEWS | | | | | Totals |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 01 Strategies to Develop Speaking Skills | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 011 Strategy to Teach Grammar | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| 014 Strategy to Teach Vocabulary | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| 019 Teachers' Responsibilities | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| 025 Importance of Teaching Grammar | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 029 Teachers' Opinions | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| 03 Teacher's Constraints | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 04 Strategy to Overcome Different Levels | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 05 Time Constraints | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 08 Group Work Constraints | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Totals | 8 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 41 |

FIGURE 1. Frequency Table of Codes

More codes than the ones shown in the table were established according to



the five (5) interviews, but the highest ranked ones are considered in the previous table. They are in order from: “Strategy to Teach Vocabulary” with 6 points. It is followed by the codes, “Strategy to Teach Grammar” and “Importance of Teaching Grammar” with 5 points. “Strategies to Develop Speaking,” “Teachers’ Responsibilities,” “Teacher’s Constraints,” and “Group Work Constraints” have 4 points. Finally, the codes “Teachers’ Opinions,” “Strategy to Overcome Different Levels,” and “Time Constraints” have 3 points.



5.2. CODE FAMILY NETWORK: Analysis

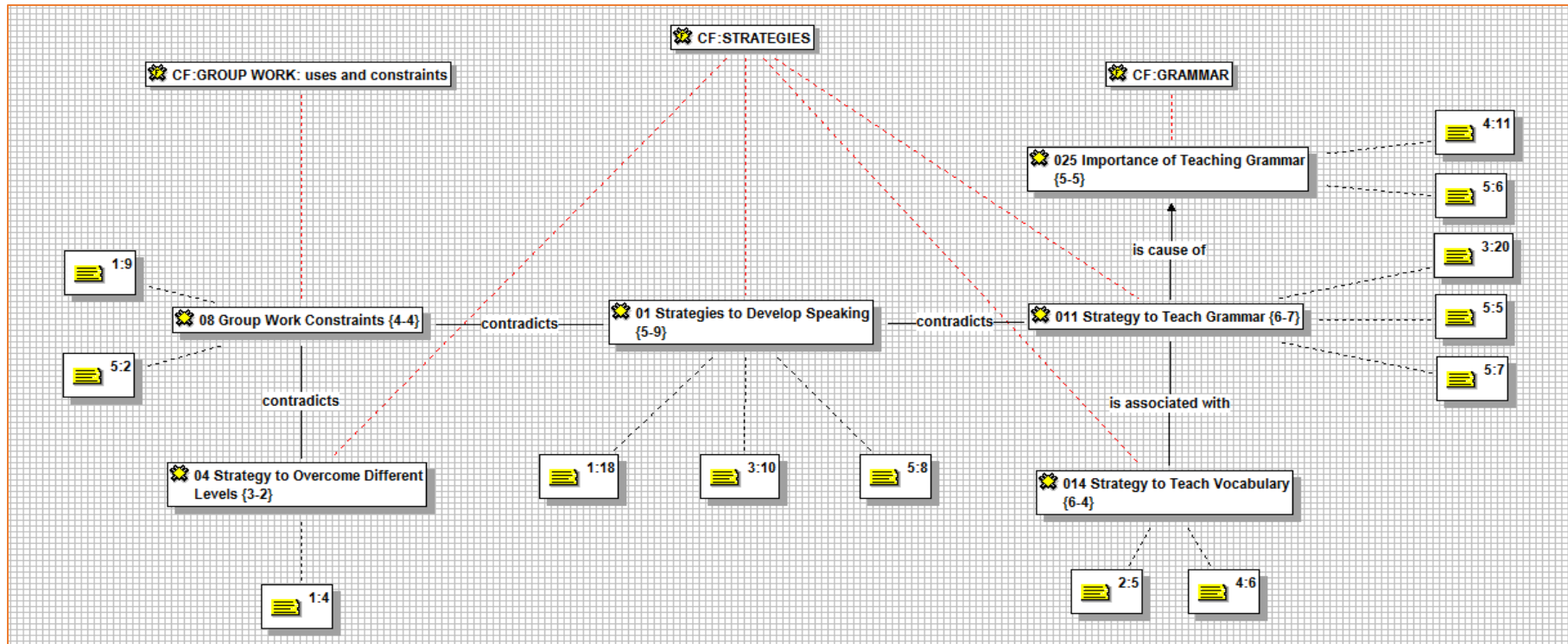


FIGURE 2. Code Family Network⁴

⁴The nodes on top of the page are the code family networks from left to right, **GROUP WORK: uses and constraints**, **STRATEGIES**, and **GRAMMAR**, which are linked to the codes that are part of each family. Each code is linked to a frame, which contains the number of the interview separated with a colon from the code number. For example, in the quotation **1:4**, (1) represents the number of the interview, and (4) the code number.



The code family network was based on the results of the previous frequency table. This network shows the links among the most relevant information of the three most important code families such as **GROP WORK: uses and constraints**, **STRATEGIES**, and **GRAMMAR**.

Focusing on the core of the study, the code family, **STRATEGIES**, is explained first. As it can be seen in the network above, the nodes linked to this code family, from left to right, are **Strategy to Overcome Different Levels**, **Strategies to Develop Speaking Skills**, **Strategy to Teach Grammar**, and **Strategy to Teach Vocabulary**.

The node, **Strategy to Overcome Different Levels**, is represented by the quote **1:4**, which states the following:

“Las de nivel medio, oye, trabajan de maravilla y como que con ellas hay como soltarse y ellas también se sueltan un poco más entonces se sienten que están bien. Se sienten que saben, se sienten que están en un grupo en donde ellas si pueden dar más. Entonces ellas comenzaron a desarrollar, pero ya juntas [...] inclusive con ellas se trabaja lindísimo...”

Teachers were explicit in stating the use of group work in their classes in order to overcome the difference in the level of the students. In fact, in the learning process, there are more advanced learners than others, so the teachers claimed that to group low level pupils with higher level could help them increase their knowledge to learn the language better. At the same time, all this information contradicts the node, **Group Work Constraints**, which belongs to the code family, **GROUP WORK: uses and constraints**. Regarding this node, teachers explained the potential and the real problems they had when using group work in class. The



participants also mentioned the negative effects when applying such strategy. For instance, discipline, waste of time, schedule, and class hours were among the highest ranked ones.

✓ However, the perceptions mentioned below are myths (Brown 226). For example, in the quotation 1:9 the participant mentioned the following:

“Entonces, los trabajos en grupo... ni en Inglés, ni en ninguna material no sirven... Si vamos a la realidad no funcionan...”

Contrary to this idea, Brown states that group work not only provides the learner “quality” but also “quantity” of communication in the class hours. It also requires learners to work harder and become even more responsible when they are given a task as members of a group. Furthermore, Brown argues that pupils contribute with their own ideas. Therefore, the knowledge learners produce, when working in groups, proves that to use group work strategy is not a waste of time. It is probably that teachers are aware of the learners’ needs to learn English, but they do not attempt to apply this strategy (225).

✓ In fact, the participants argued that group work was not convenient as they perceived only the problems and did not allow themselves to look at the advantages. In the same quotation, the teacher claimed this:

“[...] tendríamos que estar con el grupo... cuidando, y son muchas alumnas para poder cuidar...”

Contrary to this, Brown claims that teachers must control the groups and guide learners since the implementation of group to the class is part of a process (226-227). However, it is not necessary to be aware of every movement of every



student, but only the adequate attention that gives them enough opportunities to develop their knowledge with autonomy (228).

✓ Another myth is illustrated in the quotation **5:2**:

“When the students work in groups, they look for the better students. The better students did everything, the others... try to copy... no work eh...”

It is a common phenomenon in the classrooms that students initiate groups with the “best students,” but it is not a strong argument, which makes teachers avoid using group work in class. Brown contradicts this idea and claims that teachers’ role, as a guide of the class, is to select the members of the group taking into consideration their differences and assigning them different tasks (226). Without being authoritarian, the teacher should be able to direct the class and have students become accustomed to working with different levels in the groups and with a variety of elements.

Focusing on strategies, the following node, **Strategies to Develop Speaking**, is represented by the quote **3:10** that states the following:

“Pero a través de los diálogos, de las frases útiles, a través de frases diarias es lo que se puede utilizar una interacción tanto estudiantes con estudiantes como profesor con estudiantes o estudiantes con profesor.”

According to the Communicative Approach, the strategy “dialogue” is appropriate for developing Speaking since it provides the learners the opportunity to talk with a partner and exchange ideas. An important fact is the bidirectional interaction among teacher-students and students-students, where the teachers pay attention to the communication among teachers-students, and students-students. Although 2 out of 3 participants stated the use of communicative



strategies, there is still the application of traditional strategies such as oral classes, which are based on the Audio Lingual Method. This method demands the preparation of the teacher as she is in charge of being a model to be followed by the learners. This situation is illustrated in the quotation **1:18**:

“Bueno, yo pienso que una de las situaciones es la de mantener precisamente clases orales, solo orales. [...] las chicas necesitan entrenamiento y para que ellas vayan soltándose se necesita mucho más tiempo. Porque no podemos comenzar, o pedir a las alumnas que... que vengan, que pongan allí, y hablen, y contesten. Yo no les pregunto, obvio necesitan tiempo para pensar. Ellas necesitan un poco de tiempo hasta para organizar sus ideas, ordenar sus ideas. Por ejemplo, en la clase yo para que puedan, se suelten un poco, generalmente que les he dado. Ellas, escucharon ustedes... que yo leí algo y les hago repetir y para... mejorar la pronunciación [...] yo primero les hago pronunciar palabra por palabra y después les leo rápido y les hago que cada una lea a la mayor velocidad [...] De allí a lo que es conversación cuando me toca hacerles preguntas es pérdida de tiempo a veces...”

In fact, learners are in contact with the language, but there is no production of the language since there is no interaction. Therefore, communication does not take place. How can learners produce something in English if they are only listening to the teacher? The teacher did not offer a clear process by which she promoted students' speaking. In this case, it can be said that the teacher applies a teacher-centered approach. At the end of the quotation, the participant mentioned that inquiring students represent a waste of time. However, it could be caused due



to lack of students' understanding or the lack of the teacher's preparation. Therefore, it seems impossible for the teacher to have learners answer the questions in class.

In the quotation **5:8**, another participant stated that to develop speaking, warm-ups are effective:

“Para mi eso es posible con el calentamiento con los warm-ups [...]. My thesis was on warm ups I like TEFL.”

Besides the use of warm-ups for preparing students' minds for the target language or L2, this strategy is also used to develop Speaking in an uncontrolled manner. Warm-ups are developed in less than five (5) minutes in which the language has not been planned.

In this case, it can be inferred that the teacher uses only warm-ups to develop Speaking as she has a wide knowledge regarding warm-ups. Therefore, it can be said that there is the need for more exploration since there is a variety of strategies to be used in class. Of course, the use of the strategies depends on the level of students, but in this case the study is applied to high school learners. Therefore, there are other alternatives such as role plays and information-gap among others, which could depend on the topic, the time, the level, and the motivation that students have.

After this analysis, it is important to mention that this node, **Strategies to Develop Speaking**, contradicts the node, **Strategy to Teach Grammar**. Most of the strategies mentioned to develop speaking are communicative, whereas the strategies to develop grammar were not set in context, which is an essential component of communication. In fact, the majority of the participants decided to



apply purely traditional strategies, which do not obey the principles of the Communicative Approach, as is demonstrated in the following quotes:

In the quotation **5:5**, the participant mentioned:

“Yo les mando de los libros... a copiar y a traducir las lecturas, pero yo les enseño la gramática.”

In the quotation **3:20**, it is stated:

“Yo, la gramática les explico claramente como es el patrón gramatical de una oración en diferentes tiempos, o sea, como debe ser así mismo, al menos a mí me ha gustado.”

Another point of analysis is the perception the participant has regarding the strategy used. In fact, teachers seem to use strategies based on their own preferences without taking into consideration the most appropriate ones for the learner's development. In short, teachers seem to use strategies to which they have some affinity. This could be due to the period of time they have been using a specific strategy, or the fear of applying other ones.

Focusing on the next node, **Strategy to Teach Vocabulary**, the results showed that the majority of the participants, 2 out of 3, used communicative strategies; even though, one out of three still uses the commonly known list of vocabulary, which are learned in an isolated way and mechanically memorized, as is illustrated in the quotation **2:5**:

“Utilizamos mucho el diccionario... yo exijo a mis alumnos, todas las clases el diccionario... que cuando ellos encuentran alguna palabra nueva no me pregunten a mí. Porque yo les puedo dar el significado, pero ellos no van a sacar nada. Más bien yo les hago que ellos... eh... utilicen el diccionario,



saquen la palabra nueva y lleven un control en el cuaderno de vocabulary que yo tengo.”

Therefore, it can be implied that although learners look for new words in the dictionary, such vocabulary is not learned significantly since it is written in long lists in which it can be learned or forgotten. It is factual that a pupil looks for more vocabulary when it is needed since the learner has the necessity to learn a new word for communication. Therefore, it is not always necessary to write it in a list of words. However, when the learning is compulsory, it is not for communication purposes.

Contrary to this situation, there is the use of communicative strategies that makes the learning process environment more effective. In fact, some communicative strategies help lower stress and prepare students minds for the language. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration that using different strategies allows for the learning process to be accomplished utilizing all three modes of learning: visuals, auditives, or kinesthetics.

Regarding the same idea, in the quotation **4:6**, the participant claimed the following:

“Tratar de entender el vocabulario con sinónimos, o si es posible hasta con dibujos que les va a servir a los estudiantes, pues a entender.”

Synonyms and pictures are strategies highly recommended to be used in class since they allow learners to link the word with its meaning. That is why the new word is learned meaningfully. It is worth mentioning that the use of a monolingual dictionary could be considered as the last option when the student is



not able to understand the meaning of a word. A bilingual dictionary is highly recommended.

The same participant pointed out this:

“Si ya no mismo me hago entender, o no se deja entender el estudiante, a lo mejor usar el diccionario para estar seguro del significado de la palabra.”

All this information regarding the node, **Strategy to Teach Vocabulary**, contradicts the node, **Strategy to Teach Grammar**.

Following this idea, regarding the node, **Strategy to Teach Grammar**, it was already mentioned that teachers would rather use traditional strategies to which they expressed the preference towards the grammar pattern approach, mechanical translation, and an empirical method, which has not had academic support. However, the teacher, who uses it, claimed the effectiveness and speed of such method, which allows pupils to learn better and accomplish faster. The illustration in the quotation 5:7 demonstrates the following:

“Ustedes ven que yo tengo un patrón, un método mío propio a mí... yo me he inventado algunas cosas para que ellos entiendan y hagan rápidamente las cosas.”

A definitive conclusion, whether the method the teacher uses is appropriate or not for learners can not be presented as there is no explicit explanation of the nature or the principles of the aforementioned method.

There is no doubt that teachers think and keep traditional principles of education in their minds, and they also apply them in the classrooms. Therefore, it is important to mention the node, **Importance of Teaching Grammar**, since it is the starting point that directs teachers in their job as guides or authoritarian figures



in the learning process. This node belongs to the code family, **GRAMMAR**. Both teachers who have been asked about the importance of teaching grammar agreed to the idea that learners must become grammar masters since it is definitely a useful tool in their future lives.

The quotation **4:11** illustrates this situation:

“Considero que la gramática es bien importante en la enseñanza del Inglés porque va a ayudar a los estudiantes, pues a formular preguntas, a tratar de responder oraciones casi digamos bien hechas.”

In the same way, in the quotation **5:6** the participant argued this:

“Para que después cuando vayan, si es que van a la universidad, den el examen de suficiencia y no estén con problemas.”

That is why one could state that if grammar is important for teachers, they are more likely to focus on teaching points of grammar than in developing other skills, which are also part of the communicative competence. In fact, grammar is one of the bases for communication, but it must not be considered the core of all. This participant also pointed out that the pupils she/he has taught before are ready to teach other low level learners. This situation is a new case but must be taken into consideration since it is not clearly proven that those learners are able to communicate their own ideas. One could be able to explain a certain grammar point, but as education is for communication, no one can be sure that once learners internalize the grammar, they will be able to communicate. In fact, it was never said that grammar should not be taught or that it is not useful. The point is that the importance grammar has in the learning process should not be placed above communication, for which a language was developed.



5.3. Conclusions

5.3.1. Misconceptions about Strategies

In some cases, it seems that the teachers are not open-minded, and they believe that there are strategies, which are the best for learning English such as memorization, written repetition, among others. Furthermore, some teachers claimed that English can be learned by writing and storing the information in students' minds. Then, it can be concluded that if teachers have the traditional strategies in mind they will apply them. This was actually seen in the observations of their classes (Calle et al. 12). It is to response of human nature that people act according to their beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, teachers will probably apply the strategies they believe are most appropriate for learners to acquire the language, although the strategies are old-fashioned and inadequate to learn a foreign language.

This perception is tied to the principle of transmission, which is related to the well-known Traditional Education supported by the Audio Lingual Method, the Processing Information Approach, and the Grammar Translation Method, among others. These methods focus on teachers more than on students, who have to translate, memorize, and pronounce correctly. This system was applied without taking into consideration the context within the language must be learned. The following quote illustrates this situation in which **P2**⁵ argued this:

“Repeticiones. Si ustedes creen que con 5 está bien, se quedan con 5. Si ustedes ven que con 20, está bien hagan las 20 digo. Es la única manera

⁵ **P2** stands for (Participant 2). Hereafter, this nomenclature is used since the raw data quoted here have not been used in the code family analysis previously presented.



de que aprendan el inglés porque el inglés es eso, es practicar, es escribir.

Y yo les digo, una vez que graben en su disco duro no se les va borrar.”

5.3.2. Eclectic Methods

It can be inferred that teachers apply eclectic methods, which consist of the blend of traditional and communicative ones. In the interviews, it was seen that most of the participants talked about the use of some traditional and communicative strategies in the same class.

The following quotes from **P4** were taken to demonstrate this fact.

“Ya dentro de la enseñanza de la gramática solamente se empieza con lo que se dice transformation drills.”

However, the same participant mentioned this:

“Si son muy buenas las actividades de information-gap, porque nos ayudan a completar. [...] Considero que es muy importante esta actividad.”

The same teacher seems to use traditional and communicative strategies at the same time, although the traditional strategy, transformation drill, is being misused. In other words, it does not fit the purposes to which it was designed. Actually, the participant stated the use of transformation drills to “teach” grammar. However, this strategy is used to “practice” grammar. Transformation drills are used in a lesson plan as one option for the mechanical practice of the target language or L2. With this, one can not establish that mechanical drills must be completely avoided in class; instead, teachers must know the purpose by which each strategy was designed to apply it efficiently.

5.3.3. Empirical Methods

Also, some teachers mentioned the application of their own empirical



strategies, which in spite of the lack of theoretical support, teachers claimed work and help learners acquire the language better. In this case, experience is the tool teachers use to apply such strategies in class. For instance, **P5** argued the following:

“Con mi método... porque ustedes ven que yo tengo un patrón, un método mío propio. A mi... yo me he inventado algunas cosas para que ellos entiendan y hagan rápidamente las cosas.”

Although the teacher mentioned the use of an empirical method that really works, the teachers did not explain it. The teacher did not explain what other things students can do faster using her method. A quote taken from **P1** illustrates another teacher's use of an empirical method:

“Yo quiero hacer la prueba... para ver qué es lo que pasa realmente. Reuní a un grupo que sabían más y a otro grupo, verdad, que no saben. Bueno, con las chicas que más saben, a pesar de que estaban mezcladas las del nivel medio, oye trabajan de maravilla.”

Besides the use of empirical strategies, it is explicitly established that teachers discriminate learners depending on the level of their knowledge. One can argue that to study with high level students is a good idea. However, if teachers have the perception that some learners are not as good as others and treat them in that fashion, learners may feel discriminated. This situation may cause learners' decrease of effort and motivation. Contrary to this, learners, who are considered the “best students” of the class, could be empowered by the teacher and work better and harder since they could be motivated by the teacher's expectations.



5.3.4. Misunderstood Terms

5.3.4.1. Information-gap

In some cases, teachers misunderstood or did not recognize some terms used in the questions. For example: some teachers did not recognize the strategy, information-gap when using its technical term, which is illustrated in the following quote.

Interviewer: “¿Utiliza actividades de information-gap en su clase?”

I9: “Todo el tiempo se utiliza este tipo de información para beneficio de ellas”

It is important to remark that some teachers seem to answer, although they did not really know what they were asked.

Interviewer: “Ok. ¿Considera usted útiles las actividades de information-gap?”

I10: “Claro, si, si, si, si. Le utilizo inclusive para que ellos puedan tener una idea, información antes de que ellos puedan trabajar.”

Teachers misunderstood information-gap as an opening activity, which is presented at the beginning of the class, or the instructions or the summary of the entire content that is about to be taught. Meanwhile, this strategy is used to develop speaking, and it is mostly applied in pairs since one student has the answers, and the other asks questions in order to get the information to complete the task. However, it can not be definitely determined that teachers do not know the term as they could use the information-gap strategy in their classes without knowing its technical name. Perhaps, some teachers could have forgotten the name of the strategies they use as time passed, as is illustrated in this quote:

Interviewer: “¿Considera útil las actividades de information-gap?”

I11: (Whispers) “¿Cuáles son esas?...”



Clearly, one can notice that the participant seems trying to remember what strategy the interviewer is talking about since the name was not familiar for the teacher.

5.3.4.2. Context

It was also found that teachers seem to misunderstand one of the Communicative Approach principles, which states that grammar must be taught in context. It does not state that teachers do not need to give any grammar explanation, which in fact consists of using parts of the texts, readings, or any other didactic material to present the grammar items. Grammar in fact, needs to be taught, but in context. This process is opposite to the traditional way in which teachers present the grammar points in an isolated manner. Also, the fragments of the readings are taken from anywhere despite the fact that learners may not be familiar with the topics of the readings. It is necessary to clarify that grammar points are important for the communicative competence, which must not be taught traditionally with large explanations about the use of the different tenses. Instead, grammar should be taught in context, which means through conversations, by using readings, games, etc. In short, the teacher may not have a clear idea how to use the technique (conversations) or material (speaking activities). The point is that teachers are not compelled to avoid teaching grammar or using the structure pattern to teach grammar, but they have to take the information from material previously used in class. For example, **I12** argued the following:

“No, no puede ser así nunca siempre dentro de un contexto y no como repetición sino más bien como ejercicios con diferentes verbos. Por ejemplo, de la página treinta, nosotros tenemos ahí como unos cien verbos.



Entonces, a veces yo digo vamos a trabajar con unos cinco verbos, a ver hagamos ejercicios con éste.”

Another point of view showed that teachers seem to misunderstand the word “context.” They mentioned that it is not possible to teach in context since this is not a native English speaking country. However, this is a misconception of the term because “context” means that the language must be related to a topic in real life, in spite of the learners’ country of residency, in this case a Spanish speaking country. The teachers misunderstood the term “context” with the environment in which learners acquire the L2. Also, the language should be used in a simple and as real way as possible, and the grammatical points should be linked to a topic, which should not be presented in an isolated manner. The following quote from **I13** illustrates this perception:

“Dicen las chicas del proyecto Cradle⁶ que no se tiene que enseñar la gramática que todo va en contexto, pero no me parece así. Porque no estamos en un mundo de habla inglesa, sino que están aprendiendo el Inglés. Pero, no estamos involucrados en ese mundo de habla inglesa. De hecho, no creo que se les vayan aprender así tan fácilmente de una.”

5.4. Conclusions about Other Findings

Besides the findings regarding teachers’ perceptions on their strategies, there are other findings, which are relevant to mention in this study. Such findings are related to **Teaching Grammar in Context, Teacher’s Constraints, Time Constraints, and Contradictory Opinions.**

⁶ The participant referred to the trainers of the Cradle Project of the Ministry of Education, at that time.



5.4.1. Teaching Grammar in Context

Teachers talked about the importance of the context when teaching grammar, but they did not apply this principle in their classes. This situation, of only talking about it, could be because they have heard about this term in the workshops they have taken from the Ministry of Education.

Regarding this situation, **P5** mentioned the following:

“But it is important to teach grammar in context according to the text, according to the book...”

Later on, **P5** mentioned the courses:

“La gente del proyecto cuando han venido a dar cursos... no comparto. Aunque el Ministerio nos obligue a eso, no comparto y yo si uso el libro pero para las lecturas que cojan y traduzcan.”

However, there is a clear incoherence with what teachers say, with what they apply in their educational practices. Also, it seems that the textbook forces teachers to talk about the context or have it in mind. To be aware of the existence of the term “context” does mean that it is truly useful for teachers as the grammar is not applied in context. Therefore, one could claim that although teachers mentioned the term “context” in the interviews, it seems that they are not familiarized to the pedagogical implications, the use of this principle of the Communicative Approach, means in the learning process. In fact, it seems that teachers talk about the “context” because such term is “in fashion,” or it has become a commonly known term among teachers in the educational arena. It can be concluded that although teachers have the idea of teaching grammar in



context, they still use traditional methodologies, which is clearly seen in the interviews.

5.4.2. Teacher's Constraints

P1 claimed that the problem was students' attitude since they showed some behavior patterns, which did not allow them to work appropriately, as is stated in the following quote.

“Acá, en cambio el sistema nos obliga a que nos detengamos con quienes no saben. Entonces, el rato que nos detenemos con quien no sabe, las que pierden son las chicas del nivel alto exactamente que puede desarrollar. Y hay una pérdida de entrenamiento porque no se les puede tomar en cuenta solamente a las chicas que pueden desarrollar. Porque hay que estar trabajando mucho más con las chicas que no saben, o no desarrollan y las que no desarrollan porque, porque no les gusta el inglés. Porque son las que definitivamente no estudian nada. Porque son las inquietas que no atienden, entonces es imposible desarrollar. Yo sé que en los colegios particulares esto no hay. Como pero, lo ideal sería que pudiésemos trabajar por niveles. Fuera mucho más fructífero, no habría tanta pérdida de recursos en todos los sentidos, entonces esa es la situación.”

As a conclusion, it seems that teachers consider low level learners as a problem for the high level learners' development. Also, they mentioned the use of questioning as a waste of time as some learners do not always answer. It can be inferred that the teacher wants high level learners to continue learning, but low level learners have become a negative influence that deters the “good students”. It



is a remarkable perception that should help people to reflect on the idea that only “good students” are influenced by “bad students”.

The reality of the situation is totally different since both students are influenced by each other. It is time for the teacher to start applying new techniques that allow both groups to learn better. The problem is not the heterogeneity in the class. Instead, the subject matter is that teachers should be able to guide students in the learning process that would allow them to work as a community where both the “highly developed”, as well as the “lower functioning students” learn more efficiently. However, if there is the tendency among teachers to label students as good or bad and separate them, it will become impossible to work with both groups as a whole.

Another factor is that teachers argued that students need a lot of time to speak since it is a process, which can not be applied suddenly. However, it seems that teachers do not take time to plan the class and give learners sufficient opportunities to develop speaking. In addition, the participants seem to feel pushed and obliged to focus, even more, on “lower functioning students” than in others, restraining “good students” from developing their skills and raising their knowledge.

5.4.3. Time Constraints

Most of the participants mentioned the problem they have with timing. According to the participants, time is a problem since it does not allow students the efficient development of all the planned activities for the class. However, teachers seem to focus mostly on the text since a macro-curriculum has to be fulfilled leaving learners needs in “standby.” In fact, the participants argued the following:



P1: “Pero se pierde mucho tiempo y para nosotros el tiempo es oro porque definitivamente el texto no se acaba.”

P5: “La realidad del día es muy diferente que de la noche.”

This last perception was added to time constraints since the teacher mentioned that many students who study in the evening are workers or parents. This circumstance, as well as other factors make it more difficult to learn. This issue should be taken into consideration in the design of the curricula since there are many factors that could influence morning students and evening ones in the acquisition of the target language. In conclusion, a strict use of the textbook causes problems since teachers do not feel free to bring different activities other than the ones presented in the textbook. However, teachers have to fulfill extra and complex work as they need to look for the best way to compact the most relevant activities presented in the book to help learners perform in class. Organization may be another factor that can influence the lack of time in the class.

5.4.4. Contradictory Opinions

Also, although teachers gave their opinions about some issues, a contradiction among their ideas, perceptions, and teaching practices was observed. There is the contradiction between teachers' beliefs and the application of their teaching strategies.

For instance, **P5** mentioned the importance of using translation of texts, and memorization when teaching grammar, as is seen in the following quote.

“Uso el libro, pero para las lecturas que cojan y traduzcan.”

However, later on, **P5** claimed that she did not use traditional strategies.



“Tal vez me pueden decir que soy una profesora tradicional. No lo soy. Uds. pudieron ver que yo explico y les hago participar. Les hago que ellos creen los propios ejemplos. Yo no les di ejemplos, ellos crean... Entonces, ellos son participativos y activos. Yo, soy una guía nada más, o sea, la clase es constructiva, pero utilizan algunas partes de la gramática, usan las estructuras.”

This teacher could have the perception that she used communicative strategies because her students participated in class, but she also mentioned that students were somewhat fearful of her methods. In fact, she said that learners had to learn the language; otherwise, they would not pass the class. It appears that learners are more diligent in order to pass the class rather than learning the target language.

5.5. Final Conclusions

- ✓ It can be concluded that teachers still use traditional strategies in class. Furthermore, they seem to be book-centered teachers as most of the time they talked about the book. Also, these perceptions are associated to the idea of the great importance of “mastering” in any way; instead of “applying” grammar in context. A quote from **P4** was taken to illustrate this situation:
“Considero que la gramática es bien importante en la enseñanza del Inglés. Porque va a ayudar a los estudiantes, pues a formular preguntas a tratar de responder oraciones, casi digamos bien hechas.”
- ✓ The majority of the teachers mentioned the use of traditional strategies more often than communicative ones when teaching grammar. Also, teachers argued that grammar is important in a great extent. Therefore, if teachers think



that grammar is highly important in the acquisition of the L2, the strategies they will use are more probably to be traditional ones because traditional education grammar was perceived as more effective. Regarding this idea, **P3** stated the following:

“Mi objetivo, que ellos aprendan bien porque si yo realmente a veces he hecho, he intentado en los otros cursos si puedo hacer eso, en inglés. Pero, aquí en los décimos he intentado dar toda la clase en Inglés pero no, se confunden mucho como que tienen un poco de miedo, de recelo y al final de cuentas la clase no entiende.”

- ✓ The strategies that were used many years ago are still valid in our classes. However, they are not favored by new theories since new approaches, methods, and strategies are claimed to be better in order to learn the target language or the L2. Therefore, the use of some traditional strategies taught when teachers were students seem to have a big influence, not allowing the implementation of new ones. This can produce negative effects on the process of acquisition of the target language as teachers do not seem to assimilate the change education is going through.

5.6. Suggestions

- ✓ From both sides, EFL teachers and EFL pre-service teachers need to go through a complex process of establishing a relationship of familiarity with some terms, the use of some strategies, and the changes education is going through because both are involved in the learning process. It seems that implementation of changes in education takes time for the members of the educational society to be familiar with this new education era.



-
- ✓ It could be suggested that the name of the strategies used in classes should be included in the textbooks in order to familiarize teachers of the several names of the strategies they use. This action can help teachers to not forget or confuse the name of the different strategies.
 - ✓ The results of this study suggest that EFL trainers should take into consideration the in-service teachers' perceptions found in the analysis of the data. By knowing teachers' perceptions, pre-service teachers' minds can be shaped along the workshops, or along the trainee courses. Therefore, EFL trainers are able to guide pre-service teachers to conceive communicative strategies as the more appropriate ones to learn English.



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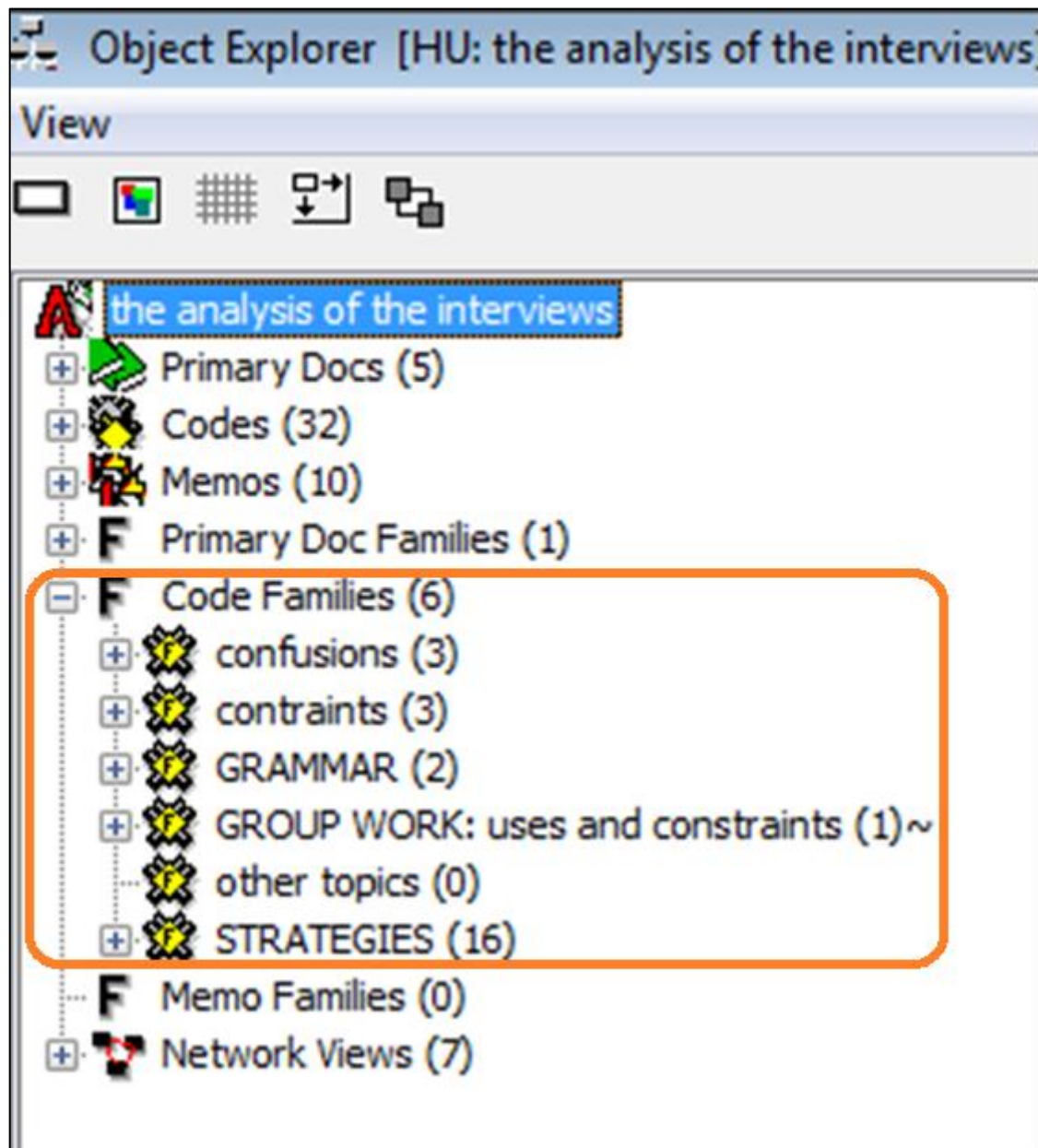
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ANNEXES:

ANNEX 1. FIGURE 3. All Codes (32)

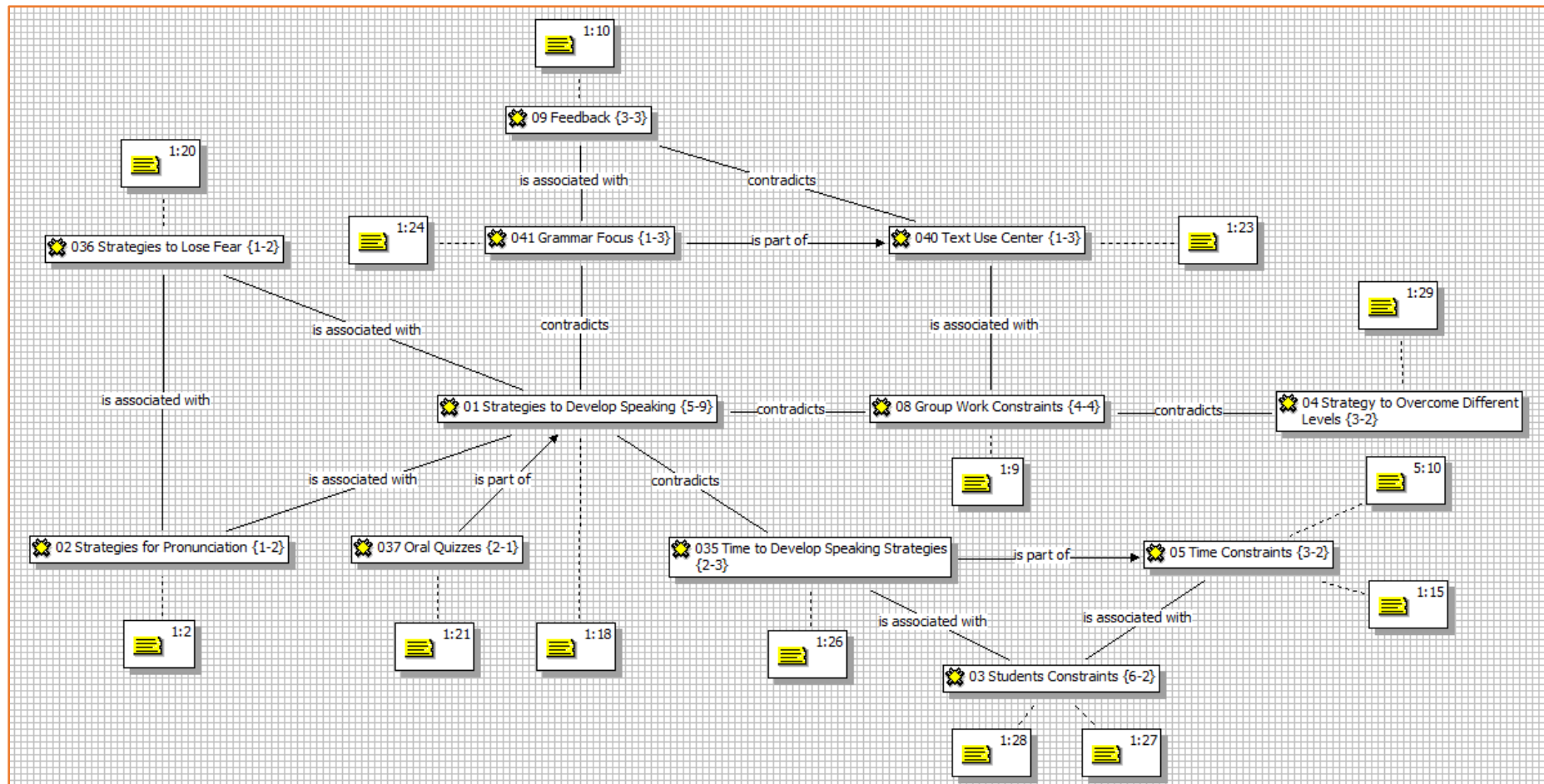
| Codes (32) | |
|------------|---|
| + 01 | Strategies to Develop Speaking {5-9} |
| + 010 | Objective of the Class {2-4} |
| + 011 | Strategy to Teach Grammar {6-7} |
| + 013 | Strategy with Skills {2-2} |
| + 014 | Strategy to Teach Vocabulary {6-4} |
| + 017 | Strategy to Motivate {1-2} |
| + 018 | Strategy for Production {1-1} |
| + 018 | Strategy to Evaluate Students {1-1} |
| + 019 | Teachers' Responsibility {4-2} |
| + 02 | Strategies for Pronunciation {1-2} |
| + 020 | Confusion {1-2} |
| + 021 | strategies to correct mistakes {0-0} |
| + 022 | Use of L1 {1-1} |
| + 024 | Oral Repetition Exercises {1-1} |
| + 025 | Importance of Teaching Grammar {5-5} |
| + 026 | Grammar in Context {1-8} |
| + 027 | Information-Gap {1-2} |
| + 028 | Problem Solving {1-2} |
| + 029 | Teachers' Opinions {3-2} |
| + 03 | Students Constraints {6-2} |
| + 030 | Pair Work {1-1} |
| + 031 | group work {1-3} |
| + 035 | Time to Develop Speaking Strategies {2-3} |
| + 036 | Strategies to Lose Fear {1-2} |
| + 037 | Oral Quizzes {2-1} |
| + 04 | confusion: strategy with objective {1-0} |
| + 04 | Strategy to Overcome Different Levels {3-2} |
| + 040 | Text Use Center {1-3} |
| + 041 | Grammar Focus {1-3} |
| + 05 | Time Constraints {3-2} |
| + 08 | Group Work Constraints {4-4} |
| + 09 | Feedback {3-3} |

ANNEX 2: FIGURE 4. Code Families (5)⁷

⁷ In the box inside the graph, six (6) codes appear, from top to bottom, **confusions**, **constraints**, **GRAMMAR**, **GROUP WORK: uses and constraints**, **STRATEGIES**, and **other topics**. This last code family was not taken into consideration since no codes were included on it.

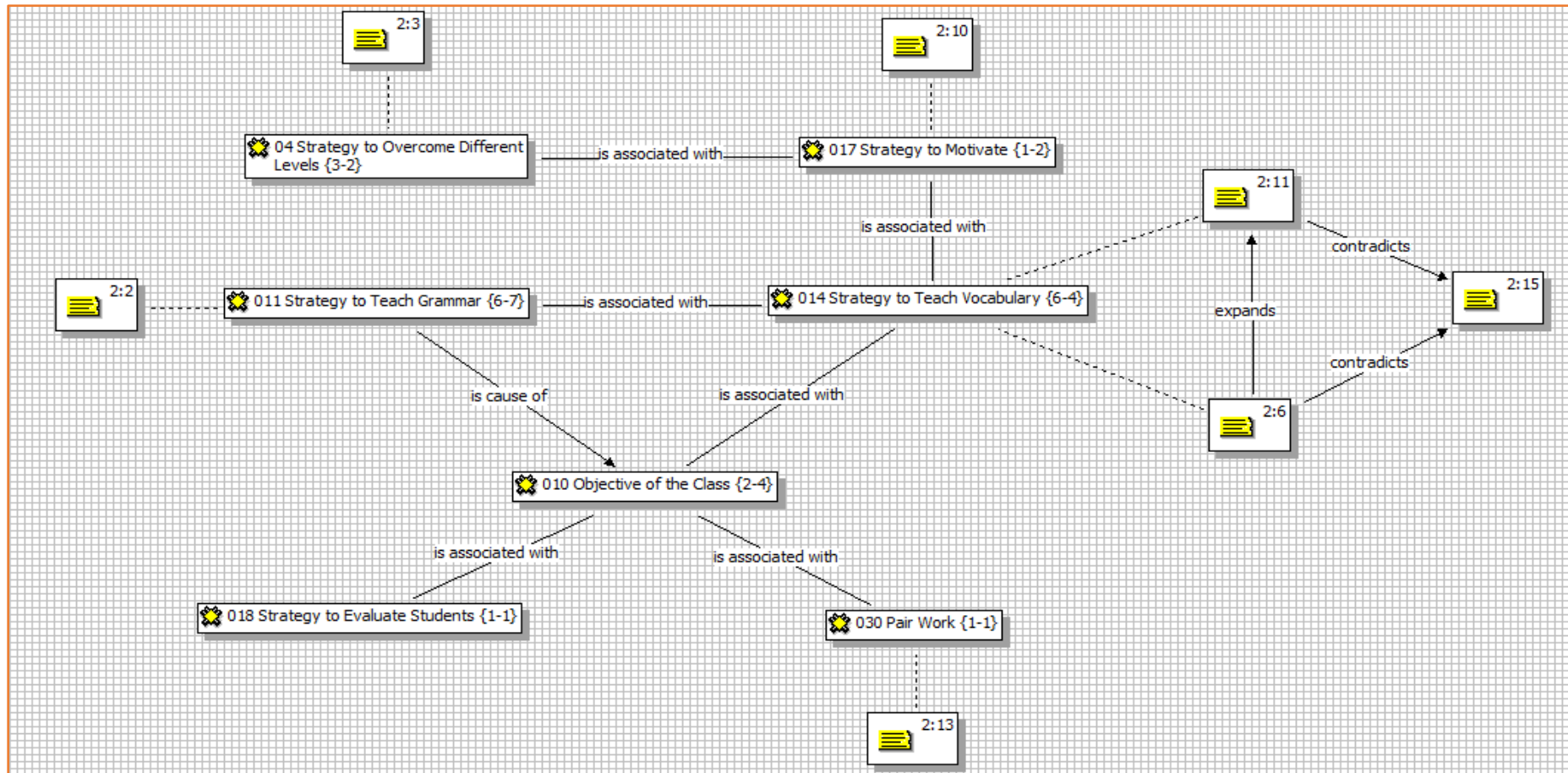


ANNEX 3: FIGURE 5. Interview Network (1)



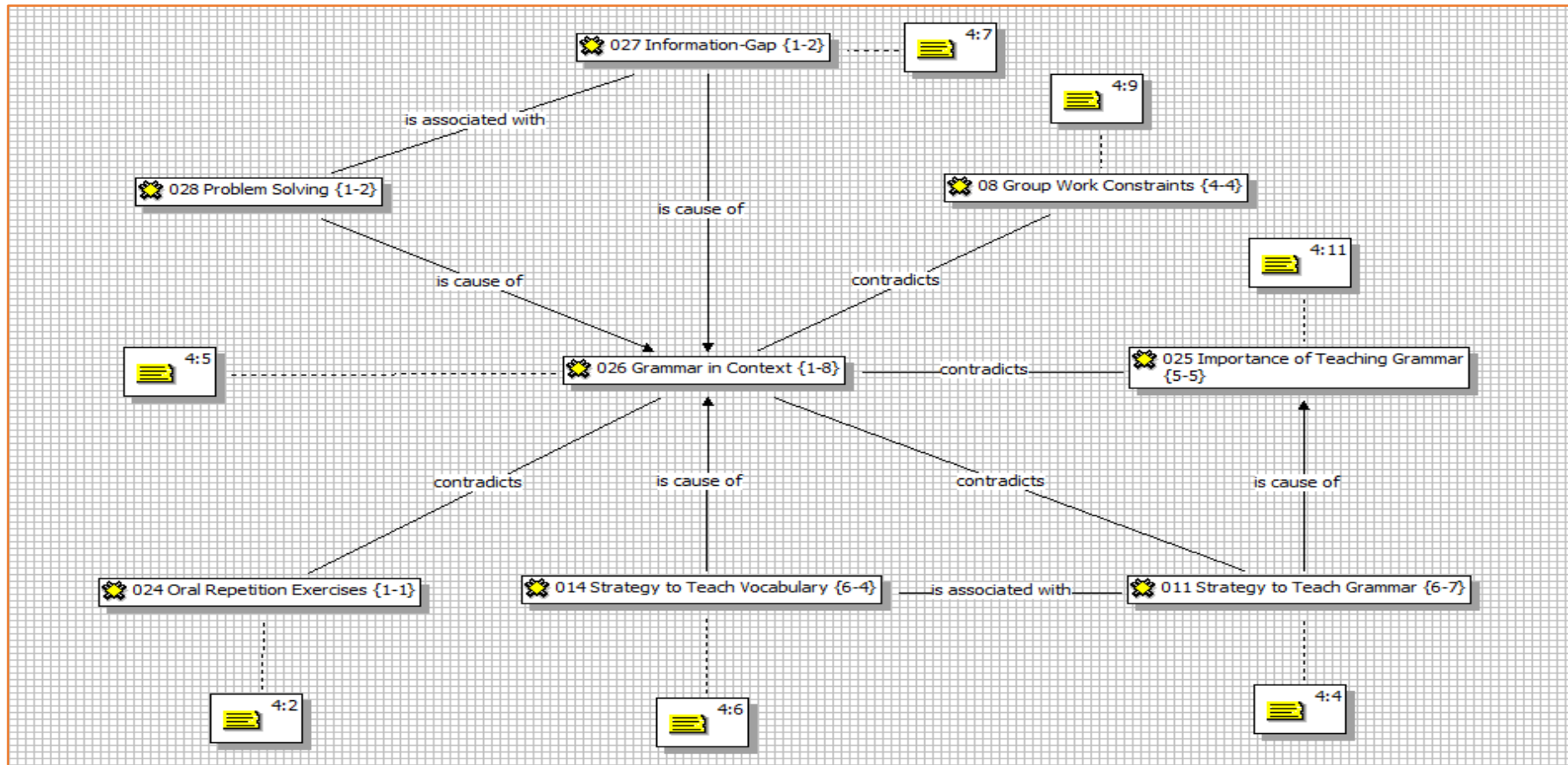


ANNEX 4: FIGURE 6. Interview Network (2)



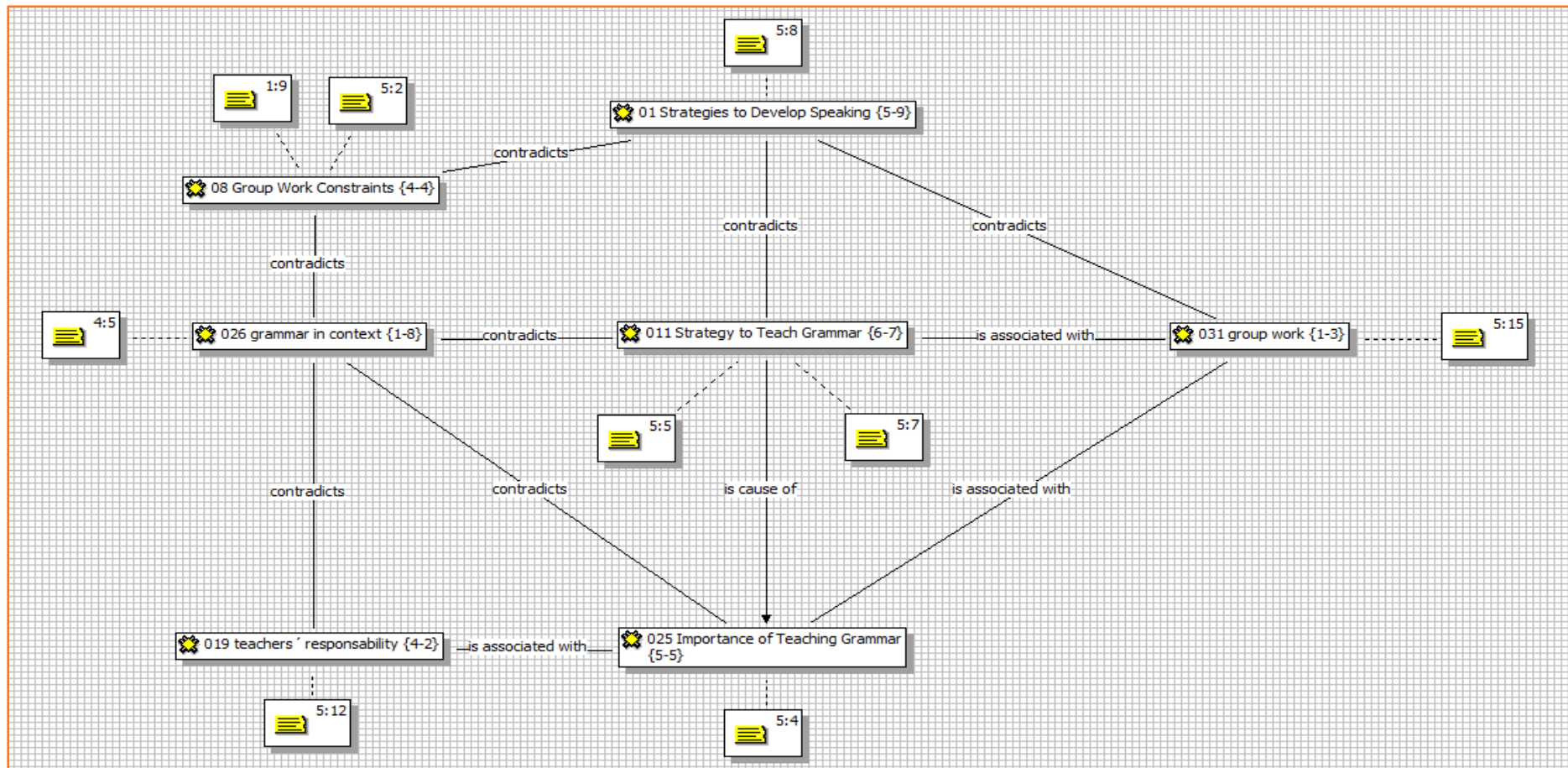


ANNEX 6: FIGURE 8. Interview Network (4)





ANNEX 7: FIGURE 9: Interview Network (5)



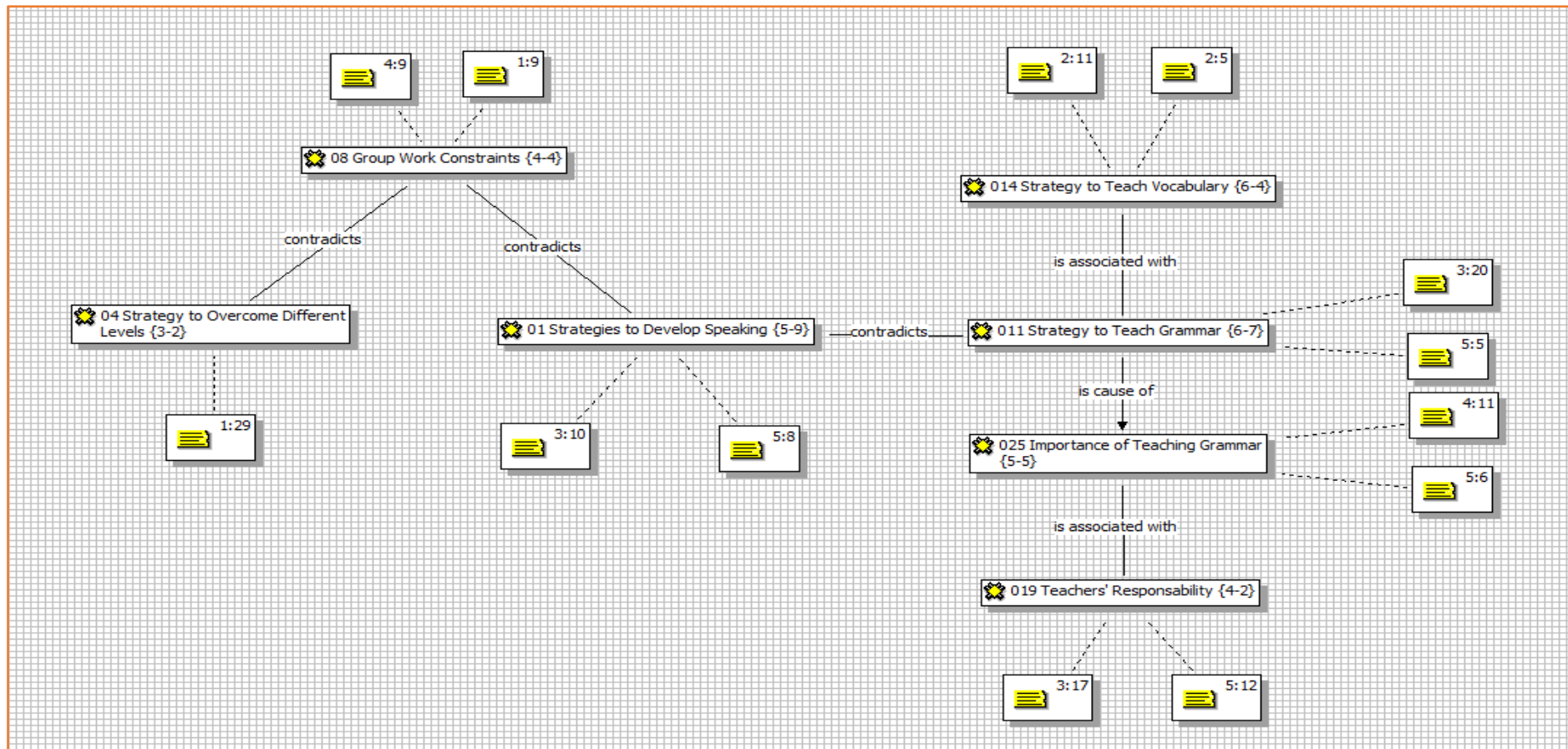


ANNEX 8. FIGURE 10. Frequency Table (32) Codes

| Frequency Table | | | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| CODES | INTERVIEWS | | | | | Totals |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 01 Strategies to Develop Speaking Skills | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 010 Objective of the Class | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 011 Strategy to Teach Grammar | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| 013 Strategy with Skill | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 014 Strategy to Teach Vocabulary | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| 017 Strategy to Motivate | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 018 Strategy for Production | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 018 Strategy to Evaluate | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 019 Teachers' Responsibilities | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| 02 Strategies for Pronunciation | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 020 Confusion | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 021 Strategies to Correct Mistakes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 022 Use of L1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 025 Oral Repetition | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 025 Importance of Teaching Grammar | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 026 Grammar in Context | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 027 Information-Gap | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 028 Problem Solving | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 029 Teachers' Opinions | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| 03 Students Constraints | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 030 Pair Work | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 031 Group Work | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 035 Time to Develop Speaking | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 036 Strategies to Lose Fear | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 037 Oral Quizzes | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 04 Confusion: strategy with Objective | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 04 Strategy to Overcome Different Levels | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 040 Text Use Center | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 041 Grammar Focus | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 05 Time Constraints | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 08 Group Work Constraints | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 09 Feedback | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Totals | 20 | 13 | 13 | 10 | 12 | 68 |

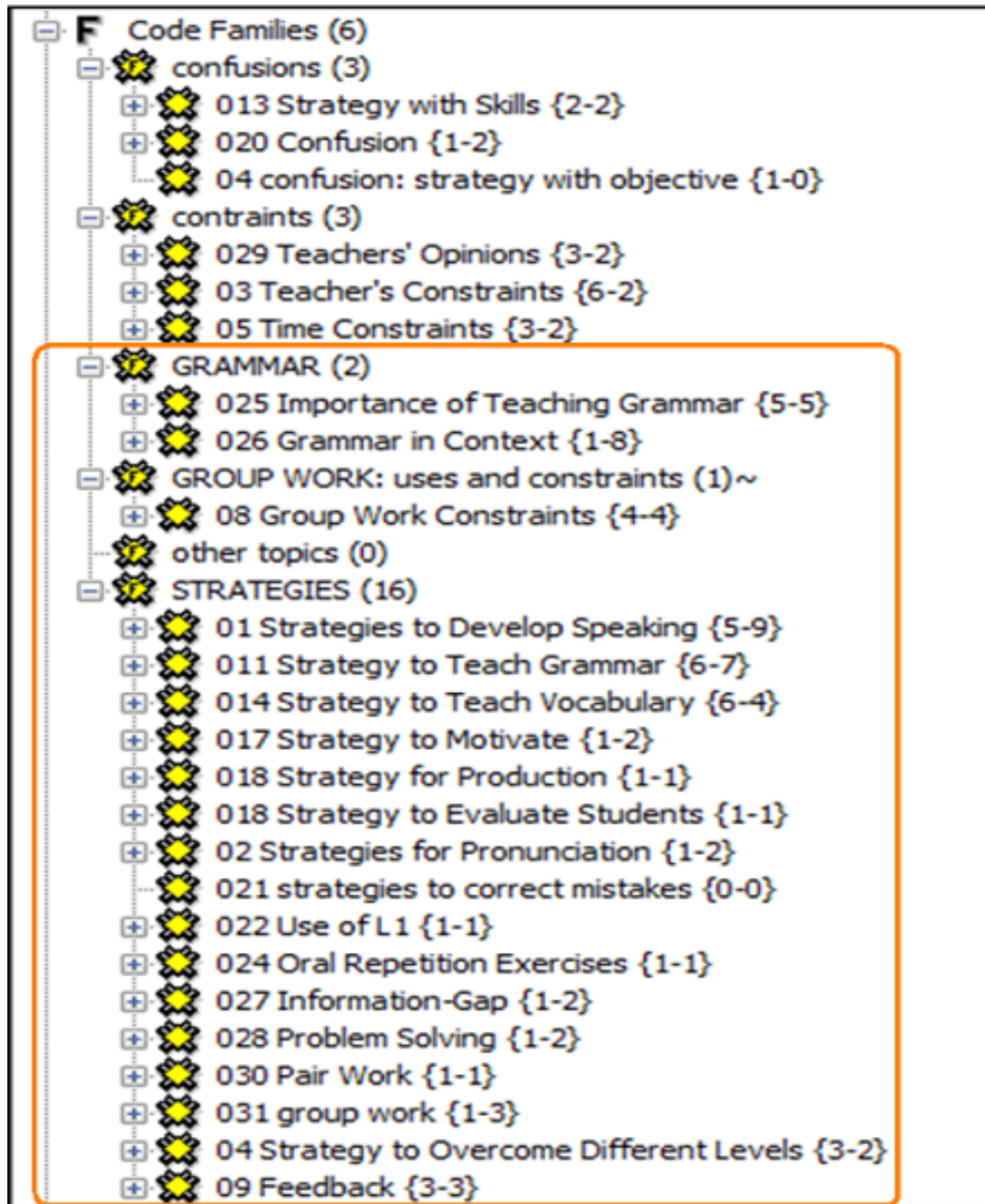


ANNEX 9: FIGURE 11: General Network





ANNEX 10: FIGURE 12. The Three (3) Highest Ranked Code Families Including the Codes⁸



⁸ In this graph, the (3) highest ranked out of the (5) code families can be observed inside the box. Each of them contains different codes.